MIKE
DAVIDOW

AFGHAN DIARY

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Ancient Afghanistan Is Making Up for Lost Time

Let me start out with a frank question to the reader, particularly my fellow Americans: "What do you know about Afghanistan, especially its history?" The answer in most cases would have to be "very little". The reply would be the same in respect to the history of Soviet-Afghan relations. This ignorance about an ancient land is not accidental. It is deliberately imposed on the people of the U.S. It makes it possible for the U.S. big business press to inflict upon them a distorted picture of present-day Afghanistan. The Afghanistan which our White House propagandists (whose "reliable" source is the CIA) have "discovered" bears no resemblance to what I saw in that country.

Let me be honest with the reader. It was only after I visited the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan that I realized (with a sense of shame) how little I knew about the Afghan people, their proud history, ancient culture and the profound democratic revolution they are carrying out. It is this personal experience, discovery, if you will, that I hope to convey to the reader. I want you to share with me the thrill as well as the knowledge of that discovery.

I want to take you with me on my journey into everyday life in awakening Afghanistan because most people in the West and especially the U.S. have been (and still are) taken along quite a different journey. Typical was the well-financed U.S. State Department- and CIA-directed journey upon which Dan Rather, prominent commentator of CBS-TV, took millions of American viewers of his program a few years ago. Aided by the CIA and accompanied by members of murderous, counterrevolutionary bands, Rather sneaked into Afghanistan from Pakistan. Staging a special skirmish for the benefit of his TV audience (which cost the lives of several Afghans), Rather puffed and panted as he portrayed these cold-blooded killers of teachers, schoolchildren, peasants and mullahs who side with the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan as the true "patriots". More recently another "enterprising" U. S. reporter, William Branigin of the *Washington Post,* sneaked into Afghanistan with the aid of the same friends, and treated the U.S. people to a re-run of Rather's "view" of that country. Branigin, who was expelled from Afghanistan four years before for his untruthful and slanderous reporting, described his Afghanistan as "INSIDE A SOVIET WAR ZONE".

Let me put a question to Branigin: "Did your 'friends' show you some of the 1,800 schools they destroyed or the bodies of the hundreds of teachers and schoolchildren they killed?"

What is the situation in Afghanistan today? Ancient Afghanistan, whose history goes back many thousand years, is in the throes of a national democratic revolution. It is as if the clock which had for centuries stopped at the hour of feudalism and pre-feudal days was now furiously moving its hands to make up for lost time. Motion, movement with

all its attending progress and problems—this is the determining characteristic of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. A view from the sky introduces you to what, among other things, this furious motion has to contend with.

The Afghan Revolution is grappling with geography as well as history. The majestic Hindu Kush and sky-piercing Pamir mountains hold its towns and villages in a vise, as it were. From the air you look down upon snow-capped peaks which resemble jagged giant's teeth. After endless miles of such rocky wilderness, you suddenly come upon valleys and plateaus, which are like craters chewed out of mountains. In these "craters", walled in by mountains, there have existed for centuries compact, isolated communities, ideal breeding places for clans and tribes.

Geography and history had for centuries locked Afghanistan in feudalism. But while geography still presents a particular problem, history is finally beginning to settle scores with feudalism. Making a temporary alliance with the mountains, armed and financed by U.S. imperialism, the counterrevolutionary bands are striving in vain to restore the vise-like grip of the past.

A visit to Afghanistan hits home to you why the efforts to turn back the clock are doomed. From the image created by the U.S. Information Service (USIS), one would gather that Afghanistan is a land of besieged cities, towns and villages, and that all normal life, let alone progress, has come to a standstill. A walk through Kabul's teeming streets explodes that myth. No U.S. street is more crowded with people from early morning to nightfall. The counterrevolutionary bands need the cover of darkness for their gangster-like assaults upon homes, cinemas, restaurants, stores. Hence, the 10 p. m.

curfew. Much of Kabul consists of walled enclaves of one-storey adobe houses, many of them situated on the slopes of the mountains surrounding the city. But daily life takes to the streets. It is nonstop strolling, selling, buying, standing to chat with one's neighbors or just squatting in the sun surveying the street-scene Afghan style. Eastern leisurely sense of time is combined with the brisk demands of trading. Merchants chant in the plaintive tones one hears in the haunting melodies of the East as they exhibit their wares. Business is booming. The stores are hardly made for customers; they are but holes in the wall used for storage and display of goods. The street is the marketplace—as it was in ancient times. I was reminded of my childhood days in New York. There, too, though hardly on such a scale or nearly as colorful, it was open-air marketing. Hanging from the side of a store are new and not so new suits of various styles and colors. A bearded man in a white turban (white seems to be the color of the elderly) patiently stands nearby eyeing potential customers. Suddenly with a sensitivity and perception born of long experience, he spots a look of interest in a passerby's face. Immediately the exciting act of bargaining begins.

Dried fruits, nuts, aromatic spices are spread out on a multihued carpet. This is just one of the endless uses of this magic carpet. Pushcarts are employed for more substantial merchandise, many of them loaded with big tangerines. Kabul abounds in Afghanistan's highly-prized fruits and vegetables, all displayed in the bright sunlight. There are thousands of small shopkeepers, street vendors and peddlars. These are private traders, and the government encourages and helps them. Private enterprise is very much alive and doing well in Kabul and

Afghanistan as a whole. Retail trade is 75 per cent privately owned, and the taxis—100 per cent. The share of private trade in the foreign sector is 50 per cent. There are three types of economy at present: state, mixed and private. It is in industry that the state and mixed economy dominate.

I spoke to Achmed Mohabi, secretary of the Businessmen's Association at the trade exhibit in Kabul. "Does the government hinder private enterprise?" I asked him. "Not at all," he replied. "On the contrary, it is trying to help us." "Then what is your main problem?" I asked. Without hesitation Mohabi answered: "The attacks upon our roads by counterrevolutionary bandits. We need an end to the undeclared war waged against us. We need peace. We want to live a normal life." I heard the same from the street traders in Kabul I spoke to, who were quite bitter about outside interference. This is the sentiment of the overwhelming majority of the Afghan people.

It is in the street that the past, present and future rub shoulders. Women in pink, saffron, pale blue and pastel green *chodarees* (veils covering their faces) peer at you through narrow slits. I was told that about one third of the women in Kabul wear the *chodaree*. Walking briskly and confidently beside them are young women in clothes as modish as one finds in our city streets.

There seems to be a mutual acceptance of the marked differences in life-styles. I stopped one woman in a rose-colored *chodaree* who was walking by with her husband and family. I asked through my Afghan guide for permission to snap a picture. To my surprise, the woman not only readily agreed; she took off her veil to pose proudly for the picture. Her husband smiled his agreement. I asked my guide for an explanation of this unexpected action. "Ours

is a proud people," he replied. "You, a foreigner, and an American moreover, showed interest in her and her family. Your fellow Americans would see them, too, when they see the photograph. Well, that touched her and her husband."

In the villages, of course, the situation is different. The old and the primitive still overshadow the new and the progressive. The April Revolution has 50 centuries of traditions to contend with. Some of the members of the Western press travelling with me focussed their eyes and their cameras on the past. One took several pictures of an old man sitting in the street smoking a hashish pipe. Later I was told he wrote a series of sensational stories repeating the slanderous rumors spread by the CIA about "drug addiction and demoralization among the Soviet soldiers" in Afghanistan. We both were at the same places and witnessed the same things. This only proves that there are those who do not want to see the budding present which points to new Afghanistan's future.

I pass by a vast housing complex of modern four- or five-storey apartment buildings housing 6,000 families. Built by a Soviet construction organization with skillful Afghan labor, it is Kabul's pride and joy. Since my visit, flats for 14,000 people have been constructed in the residential district Shahrara. But every sign of progress arouses the hatred of the forces of the dying feudal past. And so, like the schools, homes in this new Kabul have been the target of counterrevolutionary bands.

Next to literacy Afghanistan's most urgent need is modern medical care. Before the April 1978 Revolution there were only 900 doctors in all of Afghanistan, or one for every 20,000. It is in this field that Afghanistan has come to know its true friends. I pass by what my Afghan friends call a "hospital

area" and indeed it is just that. The USSR has, of course, contributed most in this field not only by building hospitals but staffing them with hundreds of its best and most dedicated doctors, nurses and technicians. Nearby is a hospital built by socialist Czechoslovakia and a children's hospital built by nonaligned India. There are 20,000 to 30,000 Indians in Kabul alone who have made their home here for many years. Three centuries ago there was a sacred Hindu temple at the foot of a hill. For decades the Indian community requested and was refused permission to build it anew. Babrak Karmal, General Secretary of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan and President of the Revolutionary Council, has not only granted permission for the construction of the temple. He is seeing to it that material aid is provided.

I pause to admire the spacious, streamlined Kabul Polytechnical Institute, another diamond in Kabul's crown. Built by the Soviet Union, it is the largest educational and scientific center in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. It is almost a college town in itself, with 40 laboratories, lecture halls, shops, student hostels, a sports complex, a concert hall and recreational areas. It is training students in 30 fields; all of them have up-to-date equipment and instruments, thus making possible teaching and scientific research at a high technical level. Specialists are trained in three main departments—civil engineering, mining and geology, and electrical engineering. More than 2,000 engineers have graduated from the institute.

Another impressive building is the six-storey modern bread factory built by the Soviet Union. The German Democratic Republic, jointly with the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, has just put the finishing touches (we were present at its official

opening) to the ultra-modern television and radio station. The Goethe Institute links Kabul to the humanistic culture of the German people. Kabul also boasts a very attractive residential area of well-built two-storey brick houses, the privately-owned homes of professional people and small businessmen.

But it is in the schools and tractor stations springing up in Kabul province (and all over Afghanistan) that Afghanistan's slow but steady advance from feudal darkness to democratic light is best seen. The revolution in farming and in the sphere of culture, now in process, lies at the heart of progress of new and at the same time ancient Afghanistan.

Standing in a corner is a huge, imposing structure enveloped in a sinister silence. It is the U.S. Embassy, now abandoned but for a chargé d'affaires (who has since been asked to leave the country for engaging in subversive, anti-governmental activity). It is an open secret that this sole U.S. presence serves not only as a listening post and nest of spies but an organizing center of terroristic activities.

It is with a sense of shame and indignation that I view this "contribution", made in the name of the American people, to Afghanistan's progress. But my Afghan hosts, as I found the Vietnamese to be in 1970, are very understanding. They know there are two Americas and have confidence that the real one will yet triumph.

A Look Back to See Ahead

To understand all this motion and movement, the coexistence of the rising new and the tenacious old, one must take a fleeting look into Afghan history. Afghanistan is a large country (655,000 square kilometers in area) with a population of modest size (15,890,000 as of 1981). It is a multinational state with the Pashtuns accounting for about 55 per cent. Among other sizable minorities are: Tajiks, Uzbeks, Turkmen (peoples of the same ethnic origin as those inhabiting Soviet Central Asian Republics), Hazaras, Chahar-Aimaks and others. The two official languages are Pushtu and Dari, I heard both languages on the television programs—the news is read twice, once in each language. The overwhelming majority of the people are of the Islamic faith (80 per cent are Sunnites and 18 per cent—Shiites).

The first centralized state in Afghanistan was formed in the mid-18th century when Ahmad Shah Durrani came to power. My visit to the historical museum in Kabul opened up page after exciting page of its ancient past. Its original name was Ariana—land of the Arians. To this day its airline bears that name. Situated in Southwest Asia Afghanistan was once the crossroads of East and West, a center of cultural and trade exchange between

India, China and the West. Its history goes back at least 5,000 years. It was a seat of culture during the period when the influence of Egypt and Babylonia was at its height. At that time it was known as Bactria, "mother of cities".

I saw ancient Greek sculptures, the remains of Greek settlements from the 4th century B. C. when Alexander the Great conquered Afghanistan. During the next two centuries Afghanistan was the home of Greek culture. Buddhism entered its life in the 3rd century B.C. and flourished for 1,000 years. Two huge Buddhas, 53 and 35 meters high, to this day bear witness to the influence of Buddhism. It was from Afghanistan that Buddhism entered China and other Asian countries. Arab influence penetrated Afghanistan in the 7th century A. D. Though the Arabs failed to conquer all of Afghanistan they left the deepest religious and cultural imprint by introducing Islam to the country. Islam imparted social and political cohesion to Afghanistan. Like many other great civilizations, Afghanistan suffered much from the Mongol invasion led by Genghis Khan in 1218 A. D.

As I journeyed through these pages of Afghanistan's ancient past, I recalled my visit to a similar museum in Hanoi in 1970 during the "dirty war" against the heroic people of Vietnam. Our know-nothing imperialist ruling class had insisted upon tearing into two, North and South, a nation which had been one for more than 3,000 years, with a history 15 times as long as our own. Today it exhibits the same contempt for the great past of a people whose history is 25 times as long as ours.

U. S. imperialism could hardly wait to replace the French in Vietnam after the disastrous defeat at Dienbienphu in 1954. Today it is "succeeding" British imperialism which in the course of its century-

long effort suffered a similar setback in its attempt to conquer and subjugate Afghanistan. The British taught the Afghan people a bitter lesson in imperialism. And the Afghans responded by giving the oppressed peoples of the world a forceful example of how to resist and repel this real "source of evil". That is why it is not difficult for the Afghan people to recognize that face of evil now speaking English with a Yankee accent. British imperialism waged three bloody wars against Afghanistan from 1838 to 1842, from 1878 to 1880 and in 1919. In addition, it made numerous attempts to conquer Afghanistan from within, always by aiding the most reactionary force whom it dubbed "patriots". Sounds familiar?

The big business press in the U. S. and the West in general take great pains to conceal a most important fact: Soviet-Afghan friendship was born in the early days of the Great October Revolution in the course of a common struggle against a common enemy—British imperialism. In 1919 British imperialism threatened both the newly-born Soviet Republic (recall Churchill's call for "strangling Bolshevism in its cradle") and ancient Afghanistan. It armed, financed and directed the Emir of Bukhara and the feudal *basmachi* of Central Asia, who, like today's U.S.-aided Afghan *basmachi,* were killing women and children, wrecking schools set up in the wake of the October Revolution, in an effort to turn back the clock of history. The young Soviet state, headed by Lenin, proposed relations of friendship and alliance to Afghanistan, then ruled by King Amanullah Khan.

Afghanistan accepted the offer and refused to allow its territory to be used as a base for operations by the *basmachi* (unlike Pakistan, which is today doing just that for the heirs of these murder-

ous feudal bands). Thus, Afghanistan gave the young Soviet Republic important aid in a crucial moment in its history.

From the very beginning the help was mutual. When the British unleashed their third war against Afghanistan in 1919, the Soviet government, at the direct suggestion of Lenin, supplied the Afghans with one million gold rubles, 5,000 rifles and ammunition, helped in the construction of a powder plant and the setting up of an aviation school in Afghanistan and sent technical specialists there. These beginnings of mutual assistance led to the signing on February 28, 1921 of the first Treaty of Friendship between the two countries. The preamble stressed that its aim was "to strengthen friendly relations between Russia and Afghanistan and safeguard Afghanistan's real independence". It was an example for the world of an equitable treaty between a great power and its neighbor, based on the principles of mutual respect of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. It should be borne in mind that these friendly relations existed for many decades between the two countries with quite different social systems and that no attempt was made by either side to interfere in the internal affairs of the other.

Hitler-led nazism attempted to replace British imperialism. However, when the nazis invaded the USSR in 1941, the Afghan government dismissed the nazi agents and maintained strict neutrality. This was of great importance in those crucial years. With a secure border more than 2,000 kilometers long in the South the Soviet Union could dispatch additional tens of thousands of its troops to the front. This was never forgotten by the USSR. I give this brief review of Soviet-Afghan relations

(deliberately concealed by anti-Soviet propaganda) because it shows that from the very outset relations between the two countries with such diverse social systems were based on MUTUAL ASSISTANCE. And these relations withstood severe trials.

A brief review of U.S.-Afghan relations shows quite a different picture. U.S. interest in Afghanistan really grew after World War II. With the cold war (which it initiated) getting hotter, the U.S. set about forming a ring of military-political blocs and bases around the Soviet Union. It was then that U.S. imperialism became interested in Afghanistan. It began to put pressure on Afghanistan directly and from neighboring Pakistan in an effort to make Afghanistan abandon its neutrality and turn it into an anti-Soviet base. Pakistan was prevailed upon to deny Afghanistan the centuries-old right of transit over its territory that was so vital for the livelihood of millions of Afghan tribesmen. Again it was the USSR that came to Afghanistan's aid, in 1955. It extended to Afghanistan the right of unimpeded duty-free shipment of its goods to third countries over Soviet territory. Also, at the request of the Afghan government, the Soviet Union helped Afghanistan to strengthen its armed forces.

It is clear why the U.S. Administration chooses to ignore Afghan history in general and the history of Soviet-Afghan relations in particular. It is much more "convenient" to portray the awakening of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America as a result of "Soviet subversion", and especially if one is to declare all these continents including countries thousands of miles from the U.S. shore as spheres of "U.S. vital interest". The method is the same whether it is El Salvador, Nicaragua, Chile, Vietnam, Angola, Lebanon, tiny Grenada or Afghanistan: make these "inferior" peoples faceless by

blotting out their history; ally oneself with their oppressors who had for centuries kept them in darkness and misery; bestow the title of "patriots" and "freedom fighters" upon these reactionary forces ready to sell out their own people in order to regain their privileges, and provide billions of dollars to arm them; and denounce any effort to help the peoples struggling for their independence and the right to choose their way of life as "Soviet aggression". This well-known scenario, which the brutal, shameless invasion of Grenada by U.S. imperialism should expose once and for all, has been adapted for Afghanistan.

The Truth About Soviet Soldiers in Afghanistan

I was told I was the first foreign journalist t meet with Soviet soldiers in Afghanistan. Exploit ing the American people's ignorance of the his tory of Soviet-Afghan relations, the U.S. bi business press has attempted to draw a paralle between the "dirty war" in Vietnam and the pres ence of a limited Soviet military contingent i Afghanistan sent there by the Soviet Union i response to an urgent appeal by the Democrati Republic of Afghanistan for help in defending th Afghan Revolution from counterrevolutionary band armed, financed and directed primarily by U.S. im perialism.

The brutal and shameless invasion of tin Grenada by the U.S. should make things cleare to many sincere people who were taken in by U.S imperialism posing as the defender of the indepen dence of Afghanistan. Can anyone now doubt tha if not for the timely response of the Soviet govern ment to the urgent appeal of the young democrati republic in its crucial hour U.S. imperialism woul have attempted to mete out the same fate to th Afghan people as it has done to the people of Gre nada, and as it is doing in Lebanon and Nicaragua The critical situation precipitated by the actions o Amin, the would-be Pol Pot of Afghanistan, th

"prospects" this opened up for the feudal forces of reaction, and the chance for U.S. imperialism to make up for the loss of Iran by establishing a new base on the USSR's southern border, all combined to produce a golden opportunity for the kind of U.S. military aggression with which the world is now all too familiar.

The truth about the Afghan "freedom fighters" as well as the real face of the international terrorists in Washington has demonstrated to the world where the source of aggression lies.

My meeting with Soviet soldiers stationed in Afghanistan took place in the reading room of the barracks. Before me was a group of typical Soviet youth. I had met their like on the BAM project, at plants and collective farms and at universities in the USSR. "Do you want to hear what our U.S. press writes about you?" I started out. All nodded agreement. And so I proceeded to read them typical reports about their "demoralized" behavior. There was a stunned silence. Let me explain the silence. We in the West and particularly in the U.S. have lived with the purveyors of the Big Lie as regards all things Soviet for such a long time that even those of us who reject it have become inured to it. Not so the Soviet people, especially the youth. Never having lived under capitalism, they find it difficult to grasp the gutter-level to which our big business press can descend. Finally Sasha, aged 20, whose kind, friendly face reminded me of the hero of the celebrated Soviet film "Ballad of a Soldier", spoke up.

"How could they write that?" he asked. There was more pain than anger in his voice. "It's not only untrue. It's a dangerous lie. And as journalists they should understand the great harm such

lies can do, especially today when your press is trying to convince the American people that we threaten them." He paused, thought a moment, and added: "I know it's hard for the American people to know what we are like. After all, they've never met us and hear so much that's bad about us." I agreed and said that was why I asked to meet them.

"Why are you in Afghanistan?" I asked. "Why?" repeated Sasha. "Here, right on our doorstep, a brother country cries out for help. Do you think we can just stand by and let the Afghan people's revolution be drowned in blood? International solidarity are not just words to us."

"Afghanistan may be on your doorstep, but still geographical proximity in itself is not the full explanation," I insisted.

"That's true," Igor, slightly older than Sasha agreed. "History has even more to do with it than geography. For more than 60 years we have been good neighbors. We helped Afghanistan in 1919 when it was fighting for its independence against the British. And remember, at that time we ourselves were fighting for our very lives against foreign intervention, in which the U.S. took part. And Afghanistan helped us when our *basmachi* tried to use its territory as a base for operations against our Central Asian peoples. It didn't permit them to do so. And during the Great Patriotic War ours was a peaceful border. So, you see, we have a long history of helping one another." Here let me add a word of explanation. It is perhaps hard for the American youth to whom the war against fascism on its grimmest and most decisive front is still the "Unknown War" to grasp how the Igors and Sashas still live with its memories.

"Our press tells the American people that you invaded Afghanistan and are regarded by the Afghan people as oppressors," I said.

"The history of our relations with Afghanistan is the best answer to that. Over the six decades there has not been a single case of violation of the borders of our neighbor Afghanistan. The same can hardly be said of the history of your relations with your southern neighbor, Mexico, for instance, not to speak of Latin American countries more distant from your borders," Igor replied.

"We have a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan signed on December 5, 1978," Sasha pointed out. "Our government was asked to give military aid several times but it only agreed when it was a matter of life or death for the Afghan democratic revolution. Every nation has the right to ask for help. It is an international right recognized for centuries. Your country asked for and received help from France when you were fighting for your independence against Britain. Why should the Afghan people be denied that right?" "Our press says you occupied Afghanistan and are here to stay because you have eyes on the Persian Gulf and the oil in that region," I told them. Vassili now joined in.

"We don't need anyone's oil. We have plenty of our own. We export oil, including to Western Europe. Your Administration doesn't like that and tried to stop it. But we are reliable partners. We don't mix politics with business as your government does. As for staying here, it takes some gall for the U.S. to speak of occupation. It has bases, permanent military installations all over the world, thousands of miles from its shores. Can anyone point to such bases and installations here? All we

have here are barracks and temporary installations. We are ready to leave as soon as the situation allows this. Our government and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan have said it again and and again. Just stop sending armed bands into Afghanistan. Let the people of Afghanistan live as they choose. Then you'll see how quickly we'll go home. But that's the last thing your Administration wants."

"What is the role of the Soviet military contingent in Afghanistan?" I asked. Sasha, who had just returned from taking supplies to villages along the Pakistan border, was the first to speak.

"It is NOT to do the main fighting. That is the task of the Afghan People's Army and it's doing a good job of that. Our main task is to prevent the forces of counterrevolution and intervention from destabilizing the economy and disrupting the life of the country, especially in the villages in the border regions." Igor added: "Our task is not only to help protect Afghan borders but to defend the people's right to a normal life. The main aim of the forces of counterrevolution and U.S. imperialism is to destabilize the economy, sabotage agriculture and starve the villages. Just think, a rich, powerful country like yours spends billions of dollars arming and training feudal cutthroats so that they can kill peasants, workers, teachers, so that they can burn crops, destroy roads, ambush convoys and prevent food, clothing and medical supplies from reaching people in the villages. I'm sure if the American people know the truth of what your government is doing here, they will speak up."

I had noticed photos on the wall showing members of the outfit at work building parks. I pointed to them. Igor nodded and brought over an album of photographs.

"You know, we spend almost as much time building houses, parks and so on as protecting the borders and carrying supplies to the villages. Here we are working together with Afghan workers and peasants in the Pamirs region on January 12, 1983, just a few months ago. Here we are together again building houses in the Pagman province and there are our men building a Park of Friendship in the Dehki Subs district in the Kabul province. Now here is someone we are especially proud of. This is Senior Lieutenant P. Telezhenko, the doctor of our outfit, giving medical aid to Afghan children. He has treated 4,500 Afghan people so far. You must know there is an acute shortage of doctors here. And one of the main targets of the counter-revolutionary bands are those who come to the villages to heal the sick."

Igor noticed the surprised look on my face as I observed the extraordinary amount of construction work done by his military unit. "We've come here to help," he explained. "And you see how much needs to be built. It's good feeling to know that we are a little part of the new Afghanistan. Work brings people closer together. And it's not just work. Here we are relaxing after a good day's work, singing each other's songs."

Everywhere, not just in the photos Igor showed me, I observed the deep affection of the Afghan people for the Soviet soldiers. The Soviet Union not only gives a considerable amount of economic, scientific and cultural aid to Afghanistan. Its military contingent takes nothing but its rations of water from the developing Afghan economy. All food and supplies for the troops are transported from the USSR.

I know it may be difficult for people in the U.S. and the West in general to imagine soldiers taking

part in peaceful construction in a foreign land. This unfortunately, was not the role played by U.S armed forces in Vietnam; nor is it the role they are playing today in Lebanon, El Salvador, on the borders of Nicaragua and in Grenada. The construction work of the Soviet soldiers is also very much in tune with the six decades of Soviet economic aid to Afghanistan which I will deal with in another chapter.

Our press portrays Kabul as one armed camp with Soviet tanks rumbling in the streets. There is as much truth in these reports as in the image of Kabul as a besieged city with all normal life at a standstill. It was rare, indeed, that I came upon a Soviet soldier in Kabul, and then usually he was a shopper at the city's colorful bazaars. As for the claim that Soviet troops are regarded with hostility as "invaders," all one can say is "the wish is father to the thought": the only ones who regard Soviet soldiers as "invaders" are the invading counterrevolutionary Mafia-like bands. Afghan citizens both in the cities and villages have the warmest feelings for the Soviet soldiers. No one knows better than they the role these played in helping to save their democratic revolution. U.S. armed forces, too, once experienced warm feelings from citizens of a foreign country and their presence was welcomed by them. That was when as part of the anti-Hitler coalition during World War II we (often together with our Soviet allies) were warmly greeted by the peoples of Europe.

The Soviet people, and that goes for the Soviet soldiers I met in Afghanistan, certainly welcome and support the policy of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and the USSR calling for a political settlement of the Afghan question (which the

U.S. not only opposes but sabotages). No one abhors war more than the Soviet people (who lost 20 million lives fighting fascism) whether it is declared or undeclared. War particularly goes against the grain of Soviet youth who are brought up in the traditions of humanism. That is why the Soviet people, with their youth in the forefront, today constitute one vast peace movement. One had but to attend the peace march of 800,000 in Moscow on October 1, 1983, to grasp how firm is the determination to prevent the Reagan Administration from pushing the world toward a nuclear catastrophe. But no one should confuse the profound desire and unceasing struggle of the Soviet people for peace with a readiness to surrender the right of peoples to live as they choose to the international terrorism unleashed by Washington.

The Revolution on the Land

How does one judge the popular character of a revolution? By what it DOES and aims to do for the mass of the people. It is not at all accidental that on this all-important question as regards Afghanistan, our big business press maintains a thundering silence. For the truth about what the April 1978 Revolution has already accomplished for the Afghan people and is in the process of doing despite more than four years of undeclared war, reveals the real hideous face of the feudal counterrevolutionary bands and exposes their U.S. backers.

In pre-revolutionary Afghanistan, 35,000 big landowners, three per cent of the rural population, owned one third of the best land. The rest of the 4.5 million hectares (a hectare is equal to two and a half acres), was distributed in very small plots among the peasants, 80 per cent of whom had less than a hectare, not enough to feed a family. Thus, to survive, the peasants had to rent land from the landowners at usurious interest rates without a contract or any insurance. Not only the peasant himself but the whole family had to work hard, including small children whose "schooldays" were spent in the field bent under a blazing sun. More than 60 per cent of the yield went to the landowner. Moreover, much of the land rented by the peasant was cut up

into small parcels scattered over an area of one to two kilometers. Thus, the land could not be cultivated with modern machinery even if one wanted to and could afford the cost (which very few could).

Agricultural products accounted for 62.6 per cent of the gross national product (in 1982-83), Abdulgafar Lakanwal, the dynamic and extremely knowledgeable Minister of Agriculture, told us. A short, solidly-built man in his 40s with jetblack hair tinged grey at the temples, Lakanwal is typical of the talented, dedicated cadre produced by the popular revolution in Afghanistan. Lakanwal, who spoke to us in English (he also knew German and Russian), is a household name among peasants throughout Afghanistan. He has presided over numerous land distribution ceremonies.

Lakanwal sealed the historic land transactions with the traditional three kisses on the cheek. The three kisses marked the end of one era and the beginning of another. They heralded the revolution on the land which is the heart of the popular revolution in Afghanistan. The feudal landlords and their henchmen have responded by murdering peasants who dared accept the deeds of ownership.

The Afghan Revolution is making a big effort to solve the complex problems which have kept the country's agriculture in the most backward conditions for centuries. Agriculture is the lifeblood of the country. Only 7.8 million hectares are arable. Lakanwal estimates that with proper amelioration arable land can be increased by an additional six million hectares—to 14 million. However, at present only 3.9 million (of the 7.8 million arable) hectares are under cultivation primarily because of lack of water. WATER IS THE KEY TO EXPANSION OF THE CULTIVATED LAND. Incidentally, it was not only through their ownership of the land that

the feudal landlords held the mass of the peasants in bondage but by their control of the limited supply of water. Water power meant political power. A popular saying in Central Asia born of bitter peasant experience aptly describes the power of water: "A drop of water is like gold or a tear". Land without water was like eating out of a bare dinner plate. Thus, in addition to Peasant Committees for the Distribution of the Land, the Afghan government has set up Peasant Committees for the Distribution of Water at province and district levels.

Most of the land has already been distributed and the precious water is being given out on an equal basis. The government is setting up an extensive system of irrigation. As I shall discuss later on the rich experience accumulated by the Soviet Union as well as its technical aid is of great significance here. A special Ministry of Irrigation has been established and at present two million hectares of land are under irrigation.

The Afghan democratic revolution has set itself the aim of bringing that ancient land into the 20th century. And this means radical changes in agriculture. Land is cultivated with feudal and pre-feudal methods which have not changed since the Middle Ages. The result is very low productivity. Thus, the central task is to transform agriculture by replacing medieval with modern mode of production. This calls for mechanization. Lakanwal pointed to the neighboring Soviet Tajik Republic. "It has similar terrain, similar people and it had similar problems. But what a difference in development, in living conditions, in cultural opportunities. It is our feudal and pre-feudal mode of production and life that account for this stark contrast," he noted.

In 1965, when the People's Democratic Party was founded, it drew up the basic land reform program

which was carried out by the April Revolution in 1978. The prime task of the national democratic revolution, Lakanwal stressed, is to modernize agriculture and drastically increase its productivity. "To do this the peasants themselves must be actively involved in implementing and organizing the program. The party and government can and will help by supplying machinery, good seeds and fertilizers and building irrigation facilities. It will guide, but it is the peasants themselves who will carry out the program. This is the essence of our democratic revolution."

Land is distributed free of charge to the landless, those with less than one hectare and poor nomads. All this explains the furious opposition of the counterrevolutionary feudal landlords. It also explains the wide support for the government among the mass of the peasants. More than 296,000 peasant households received 650,000 hectares of good land free of charge.

In February 1980, for the first time in Afghan history, a national agricultural conference was called. More than 800 representatives of peasant communities attended. The conference worked out practical measures to carry the land reform program into effect and elaborated ways of forming peasant consumer cooperatives.

Afghanistan has adopted a very realistic and flexible approach to solving the age-old agricultural problem. It takes into account the specific conditions of the Afghan countryside. At the same time, it is carefully studying the experience of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries as well as developing countries and will make use of what can be applied with advantage to Afghanistan. The USSR has given Afghanistan 10,000 tons of high-grade seed, 20-30,000 tons of phosphate fertilizer and

14 million rubles worth of machinery to set up trac tor stations—all free of charge. Lakanwal noted th profound social impact of the tractor stations.

Peasants told me how counterrevolutionary band burned crops, destroyed irrigation systems and trac tor stations, just as U.S.-backed mercenary killer are now attempting to disrupt the Nicaraguan eco nomy. One has but to meet with the peasants an their Defense Force, as I did, to realize that n power on earth will be able to obliterate the revo lution on land that has been carried out.

This is not only a revolution in the mode of pro duction. It is a revolution in age-old peasant think ing. "They have to be freed completely from th feudal way of thinking," Lakanwal stressed. Cen turies of feudalism resulted not only in economi bondage but developed paternalistic relationship (similar to those which existed in the U.S. in pre Civil War South). To overcome deeply-ingraine habits, systematic education is necessary. The form er feudal landowners tried to exploit these feuda habits and ways. They attempted to intimidat peasants, appealing to backward religious belief and traditional peasant suspicion of all authority an saying that the government would take back th land in two years. Overcoming centuries of feuda habits and thinking will take time and hard work Lakanwal pointed out. However, the democratic re volution has established a firm and secure base o the land.

The Cultural Revolution in the Shanee Village and a Girls' School in Kabul

The U.S. television camera which glorifies "freedom fighters" who destroyed 1,800 schools in Afghanistan did not show what I saw in the village of Shanee in the Kabul province. Incidentally, a TV crew from the Federal Republic of Germany was with us. It is in villages like Shanee (where 85 per cent of the population lives) that the cultural revolution is grappling with the heritage of ignorance, illiteracy and squalor bequeathed by centuries of feudalism. It is a people's battle for the right to learn. Schools, teachers, children with books in their hands—these are the main targets of the feudal forces of darkness who particularly fear the light of knowledge.

Nothing moved me more than the deep yearning for learning that I saw in the eyes of the children. That is hardly the emotion that stirs the hearts of those who regard such awakening with dread and hatred. Feudalism can only hope to make its comeback by putting out the lights in such villages as Shanee. But judging from what I have seen, darkness will never again descend on Shanee.

Accompanied by our security guard of five young members of the People's Militia armed with rifles and tommy guns and led by Amir Mukhamad, deputy director of the provincial Defense Committee

of the People's Democratic Party, we approached the foot-thick adobe wall that enclosed the Shanee village. One look at the mountains rising above the dirt road on which we travelled and we understood not only why we had to wait two hours for our armed guard but why each village has its peasant defense force. The majestic mountains which people's Afghanistan will yet fully claim are the temporary "allies" of its feudal foes.

The village is a walled enclave of one-storey adobe primitive homes with slits for windows built along pyramid lines as are the homes on the slopes of the mountains surrounding Kabul.

The more than 100 hovels are linked by an extremely narrow winding path. By comparison the dirt road we had traversed together with flocks of shaggy sheep and plodding donkeys now seemed like a highway. I was aroused from my reverie by Amin Mukhamad. His rifle slung over his shoulder, his bronzed handsome face creased in a smile, Amin pointed in the direction of a steep hill which concealed yet another cluster of buildings. "Shall we first go to the school? Yes?" he asked eagerly.

There was nothing to distinguish the school from the other mud huts except for the rhythmic, singsong chant of children's voices. The classroom we entered was dimly lit by a thin streak of sunlight penetrating the small window. Two boys in blue baggy pants (as common in Afghanistan as jeans are in the U.S.) stood proudly before the class clutching a well-worn primer as they led a group of 20 boys and girls in shouting a series of words in unison. The boys were "temporary teachers" since there is an understandable lack of trained instructors. The children glanced at their books (two to a book) and repeated the words with gusto. Pride was writ

ten on the face of Zamondodhin, a scholarly-looking man, the school's director.

"What are the words the children are chanting with such enthusiasm?" I asked him. "This is a beginners' class and so we are starting them out with a few of the most important words," he explained. "And what are the words?" I asked. "Water, bread, flower, mama, freedom, country and peace," he replied. "And do you have an English class?" I asked him. Zamondodhin hesitated, smiled and said, "Well, yes, but we are only starting, you understand. Today, in fact, we are having our first lesson." And he escorted me into another room.

"Children, we have an American with us today," he announced to 15 boys and girls from 8 to 10 years of age. Eager, examining eyes were fixed on me. There was an awkward silence and I began to feel a bit uncomfortable.

I inwardly resented those who had so defamed our good name and caused children to stare at me so questioningly. "The American is our friend," Zamondodhin explained. Smiles immediately replaced sullen looks. "Would you like to teach our first lesson?" he urged rather than asked me. I gladly agreed.

"Good afternoon, children," I began.

"Good afternoon, children," they repeated gleefully imitating me to perfection. Zamondodhin explained the words in Dari as I continued.

"People," I exclaimed.

"People," they chanted, their eager eyes sparkling with excitement.

"Of the United States"

"Of the United States," they chimed in.

"And Afghanistan"

"And Afghanistan," they pronounced with special emphasis.

"Want peace."

"Want peace," they shouted with determination I then slowly said all the words together:

"People of the United States and Afghanistai want Peace."

"People of the United States and Afghanistai want Peace." There was a triumphant ring in thei voices.

"You all get excellent marks," I said.

"You all get..." they were stumped by "excel lent". Anxiously they awaited more. "That is all fo now. Class is dismissed," Zamondodhin announced

Outside a large crowd of children had assembled News of the American and the English lesson hac travelled around the village. I was surrounded b boys and girls anxious to pronounce the few Englisl words they had learned. A boy with extraordinarily beautiful dark eyes (eyes in Afghanistan not only mirror the soul, they penetrate yours) held up a pen "Pen!" he shouted as the crowd took up the chant I nodded. Not to be outdone a smaller boy brough forth a pencil. "Pencil!" he cried out. "Pencil," al joined in. Then a very pretty girl pushed her wa past the more aggressive boys and held up he schoolbook. "Book," she said proudly. And so i went on—this spontaneous English lesson in th Shanee village.

I described this unexpected spontaneous Englisl lesson because it hit home to me the meaning o the cultural revolution now taking place in this an cient land. The school building would hardly qualif as a place of learning by our Western standards But rarely have I been in one where children wer more excited by the prospect of learning. Before th April 1978 Revolution 90 per cent of those aged 1 to 60 were illiterate; only 14 per cent of the childre and youth went to school, and only eight per cen

of them were girls. Today there are 4,500 primary and secondary schools in Afghanistan.

The school in Shanee was opened in 1982. Actually, it combines two schools, one for grades 1 to 4 and the other—5 to 9. It has 570 pupils and 19 teachers. Children come from three nearby villages. Thus, Shanee is a center of study for that rural area. Notwithstanding the shortage of teachers and textbooks, the school tries to follow a comprehensive curriculum. Among the subjects taught are: Dari and Pushtu (the two main languages), arithmetic, algebra, geometry, chemistry, physics, biology, history, geography, social studies, religion, and English which is the first foreign language taught in a secondary school with Russian a close second.

A short walk, followed by throngs of excited children, brought us to the protectors of Shanee's school—the Village Defense Force. Most of the men in multicolored turbans and dark baggy pants had never before even been inside a classroom. White-bearded patriarchs were only now beginning to learn to read and write in the literacy courses springing up in villages all over Afghanistan. No one will ever again put out the lights in Shanee—that was the message written on the determined faces of the peasant defenders of enlightenment as they raised their rifles in salute. A tall, stalwart man with a heavy mustache at the urging of the others stepped forward. Saraband was his name and he was 65 years old. He was one of the heroes who had saved the school in a battle with 20 heavily-armed *dushmans* (meaning enemy), the name the villagers gave to the counterrevolutionary bands which our press ignores. "The *dushmans* have never bothered us since," Saraband exlaimed, clutching his rifle. Mohamad Sadik, a short but sturdy man whose dark countenance was offset by a white beard, white robe

and white turban, waved his U.S.-made Springfield rifle captured from the *dushmans*. "We are defending our village, our school and our Afghanistan May they be cursed who disturb the peace of our people. And thrice be cursed those who arm them with the weapons which kill our women and children!" Sadik exclaimed passionately. Sadik said he was 65 "and maybe a little more" as he placed his wrinkled but strong hand on the head of one of the schoolchildren.

There is a world of difference between the village school and Sarcoona Secondary School for Girls in Kabul but both are key elements in the cultural revolution now taking place in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. Armed guards of the People's Militia stood at the entrance of the large rectangular brick building. In the city, as in the village, the right to learn must be defended. From the windows hundreds of excited eyes peered at us. The girls—there are 3,000 of them attending two shifts in this secondary school—all wore white, veil-like shawls draped over their long black hair and black dresses reaching well below the knees. With few exceptions, all 150 teachers and members of the administrative staff are women. From grades 1 to 4 the classes are mixed; from 4 to 12 they are separated according to sex. The universities are coeducational

Noorjahan Habib, who looked like she could be a student herself (she is 30), is the principal. She also teaches biology. English is the first foreign language though Russian is beginning to be taught And so it was quite natural that I first visited an English class. The teacher, Farkhundi Quail, too looked not much older than her pupils. I asked her to call upon one of the girls. Victoria Kaihon plump, pretty and fully at ease, rose from her seat "What do you know about the United States?"

I asked her. Victoria was silent as all eyes gazed upon her. Then she spoke as if she had long awaited the opportunity to meet an American: "You are a very big and a very rich country. We are much smaller and poorer. Why does your country make war on us? We study American history and we know a long time ago you made your Revolution. Well, we made ours. We never harmed you. Why do you harm us?" She paused and her voice softened this time as if not to offend me. "We are all human beings and we should treat each other as human beings. We see on our television that there are many good people in your country who are fighting for peace. That makes us very happy. Nuclear war would mean the end of all of us. Let us live in peace. Tell that to the American people."

For a long, painful moment we were silent as we stared at one another. To break the silence I asked the class: "What do you want to be after finishing school?" "I want to become a doctor," a tall slender girl said shyly. I turned to the chubby girl sitting next to her. "A doctor!" she echoed. One after another the reply was the same. I was puzzled by this unanimity. "Why do all of you want to become doctors?" I asked. The shy girl was not so shy now. "Because we want to help our people. We have so very few doctors," she explained. There are 15 such secondary schools for girls and 38 for boys in Kabul today. When one considers the status of women, especially in respect to education before the April Revolution, this represents quite an advance.

In Afghanistan the school is more than just a place for learning. It is a center for preparing the people for taking part in governing their affairs.

More than 30,000 teachers have been mobilized to conduct 70,000 literacy classes. Over 900,000 people

of all ages are now enrolled in schools. Everywhere in the villages (in the face of feudal terror), in the factories, in the army, the battle for light and against darkness is being waged. THIS IS THE BIG STORY OF DEMOCRATIC AFGHANISTAN THAT OUR BIG BUSINESS PRESS CONCEALS

The Truth About a People's Army

On no other question does our big business press reveal more clearly its class bias than on the question of the right of a people to choose and DEFEND its way of life.

The "godfathers" of INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM INCORPORATED bestow the title of "rebels" and "freedom fighters" on their Mafia-like bands invading Afghanistan. Our "free" press, however, reserves all its venom for people fighting for their freedom from these unsavory allies of our government. This has been particularly the case in the all-out campaign of slander directed against the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

Take a walk in the streets of Kabul, as I did, and you will come upon young workers, students, including quite a few young women, guarding schools, hospitals, factories, headquarters of public organizations. Many of these are members of the Tsarandoi—People's Militia. Go to any village and you will meet, as I did, peasants with rifle in hand ready to defend the land they can at last claim as their own. Then ask yourself the question: Would a government which fears its people ARM THEM? No U.S. puppet or "ally" anywhere has ever dared to place such trust in their own people. On the contrary, as

in El Salvador, they unleash "death squads" agains them. What our press has been deliberately concea ing from the people is that the defense of th Afghan democratic revolution is in the hands o the Afghan people themselves, whether in uniforr or in civilian dress. Afghan soldiers and officers ar simply workers, peasants and students in uniform I met these young men (and more than a fe women) and learned something about their spiri quite by chance. From experience I have come t know that it is often through such spontaneous an unplanned encounters that one acquires the deepes insights. No one understood this better than th immortal U.S. chronicler of the October Revolu tion, John Reed.

I had come with a group of foreign correspon dents to what we had expected to be a press confer ence at the newly-built Soviet House of Cultur and Science in Kabul. The "press" turned out to b hundreds of Afghan soldiers and officers who ha packed the beautiful modern hall. The "conference' was a most inspiring concert. However, it wa hardly your usual concert. Like the audience, mos of the artists were in uniform. But it was not thei common attire that united artists and audience There was no separation between the stage an hall. All were "performers". All were soldiers of th revolution.

I have often heard songs about "country" an "duty", "struggle" and "honor". Through constan repetition these words sometimes almost have th ring of cliches. There was a touching freshness i that hall in Kabul. To these soldiers of the revolu tion these were not mere words but life itself. At concert the performer is usually rewarded with ap plause at the conclusion of a number. Not at thi "concert". Here it was singing to the ACCOMPA

NIMENT of applause. Waida, a young woman in uniform with the most soulful dark eyes I had seen, sang: "My duty is to struggle. I will never shirk it." "Never! Never!" responded the soldiers as they clapped their hands in rhythm. When Waida, her plaintive voice rising, sang: "Afghanistan, you are my honor," there were many moist eyes in the hall. The climax, however, came when Mangal, a handsome soldier, sang a duet with Naghma, his beautiful wife. Our sophisticated audiences would hardly find the lyrics exciting, but to these soldiers the scene being enacted on the stage could be entitled "THIS IS YOUR LIFE".

"I love you, my dear, and we have a happy life together," sang Mangal as Naghma nodded. "But I am a soldier of the revolution and I must fight for my country." Mangal never got to finish the last two words. The hall rocked with applause, cheers, exclamations. Eyes glistened as Naghma replied: "This is my duty, too." All waited breathlessly for the final question asked by soldiers since time immemorial. Mangal sang: "Will you wait for me, my beloved?" There was child-like joy on all faces when Naghma replied: "Yes, oh yes!"

I felt the same spirit later when I met Yasin Sadiqi, Chairman of the Political Department of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. A broad-shouldered, olive-complexioned, vigorous man of 37 with jetblack wavy hair, Sadiqi cut a handsome figure. A father of four, he is one of many Afghans in uniform who were civilians only a short time ago. Not long before he had been at his job as petroleum engineer. I described to Sadiqi how our press portrayed the Afghan army. I said the American people are told that it was ineffective and unreliable and that the main fighting had to be left to the Soviet Army.

Sadiqi smiled and shrugged his shoulders as i to say: "Well, what else is new?" In the first place he pointed out, a revolution that has nothing to de fend has no right to exist. The Afghan people, h said, know very well how much they have to de fend. No one has to tell the peasant that he has t defend the land given him. No one has to tell him h has to defend his government which not only gav him the land but is providing him with water, ma chinery, good seeds, and low-interest long-term cre its. No one has to tell a worker that he has to de fend the factory which is his, the trade union whic protects his rights, the government which is his.

The U.S., he noted, has anointed the crimina bands as "defenders of Islam". But the people kno what these "defenders of Islam" are really like murderers of hundreds of honest mullahs who refus to support traitors of their own people, destroyer of mosques.

"All this is reflected in the high morale, discip line and effectiveness of our people's army," he saic "Our army is quite different from what it was onl several years ago. No one knows this better tha our enemies."

Sadiqi spoke from personal experience. Only few months ago he was leader of one of the division of the Afghan army which engaged in some of th heaviest fighting. "I know how false are the allega tions that the Soviet army is doing the fighting The main task of the Soviet forces is to protect ou borders, especially our long frontier with Pakistar It is to help defend our country against invasio directed by the CIA and the Pentagon and incite by leaders of the U.S. Administration."

The situation in the country is now stabilized Sadiqi said, although increased U. S. support fc counterrevolutionary bands calls for constant vig

lance and struggle. Today the villages of 200 out of 286 regions (two thirds of total) are under government control. The government functions at all levels in all 29 provinces. More than half of the active armed forces of the counterrevolutionary bands have either been killed or knocked out of action. Large numbers of former leaders and members of these bands have come over to the side of the revolution. This was clearly demonstrated at a conference in Kabul in March 1983 addressed by Babrak Karmal and attended by 265 former heads of counterrevolutionary groups. Bloody fighting among these corrupt, unprincipled groups is also decimating the ranks of the counterrevolution. Of course, U.S. money is used to "buy up" and recruit the dregs of society, who become mercenaries. As for the Afghan army, it is growing rapidly numerically as well as qualitatively. In the past three years it has tripled in size as has the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan.

I told Sadiqi that the U.S. press has portrayed the Afghan people as fleeing from the revolution. Sadiqi smiled again.

"Hasn't that always been how reaction depicts a people's revolution? That was how the October Revolution in Russia was portrayed. And that was how the Cuban revolution was portrayed until the criminals who fled to Florida began to create serious problems for your own people, just as similar elements are creating problems for Pakistan today," he said.

"What is the situation? Actually there are three categories of 'refugees'. First, feudal elements and bourgeois forces allied with them, both of whom have lost their privileged status. Second, those who fled as a result of Amin's repressions and atrocities. Third, and these constitute the bulk, workers and

peasants who left even before the national democratic revolution to seek work in neighboring countries. The overwhelming majority of the second and third categories want to return to Afghanistan. But they are being prevented from doing so by the hostile authorities abroad, pressured by the U.S."

Sadiqi pointed out that the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan has repeatedly called for a political settlement. He had high praise for the efforts in this respect made by UN Secretary-General Javier Perez De Cuellar. "But a political settlement is the last thing the Reagan Administration wants. Look at its actions around the world. Everywhere it is creating tensions. Let me just say a few words about the Soviet military contingent and the Soviet Union in general," Sadiqi said. "It's in time of trouble one gets to know one's true friends. If I am not mistaken, you still honor the French officer, Lafayette, for his selfless aid during your Revolution. We will never forget the selfless aid given us by Soviet soldiers and the Soviet government."

The Dead End of Counterrevolution

No privileged class ever surrendered its privileges without fierce resistance. Our own great American Revolution was bitterly opposed by the Tories (those who supported the King of England in our struggle for independence). They were "loyal" to the King but traitors to their own people. To this day the name of Benedict Arnold, a general who betrayed his own country to the British oppressors, is synonymous with the word "traitor". But to the English monarch traitors and Tories were "loyalists" while the liberators and founders of our country were "rebellious rabble".

I believe that we Americans in particular can better understand the national democratic revolution of the Afghan people and its traitors and Tories if we recall our own revolution and learn the truth about theirs.

What are the forces that make up the counterrevolution in Afghanistan? In the first place, they are those who for centuries benefitted from the feudal system: big landowners who held poor peasants and their families in bondage, their henchmen some of whom were in the legal apparatus and others we would call gangsters, and the extreme reactionary wing of the clergy, fascist-like fanatics, members of the terrorist Muslim

Brotherhood. Take, for example, Sebghatullah Mujaddedi, one of the notorious leaders of the counterrevolutionary bands financed by the CIA and operating from Pakistan. He was a wealthy feudal landowner and belongs to the ultra-reactionary Muslim Brotherhood. What is his "patriotic" goal? It is to regain the land now distributed among peasants whom he had long exploited. Mujaddedi is responsible for the death of scores of peasants who worked for him. His band has tortured to death many peasants and burned mosques.

Or take Burhanuddin Rabbani. Before the revolution he owned thousands of hectares of land. He, too, is a member of the Muslim Brotherhood. His gangs have kidnapped and murdered many workers and peasants and burned down more than 30 hospitals.

However, the counterrevolution has also drawn many innocent people into its net. For large numbers, especially among the most culturally and economically backward, the upheaval in centuries-formed feudal relations is difficult to understand and even harder to adjust to. This is particularly the case with Afghanistan's almost three million nomads grouped into many tribes and clans, who largely live not far from the border with Pakistan. For centuries, these tribes, whose members are almost totally illiterate, had migrated, many with their flocks of sheep, spending summers in Afghanistan and winters in Pakistan. They freely moved across the borders. Many even have families in both countries.

One of the peculiar features of the Afghan democratic revolution is that it is confronted with a special problem posed by tribes who make up one sixth of the country's population and are in a con-

stant state of mobility not only within but outside the country.

Counterrevolutionary forces, with the blessing of U.S. imperialism, took advantage of the "opportunity". Members of the nomadic tribes were suddenly transformed into "refugees" held in miserable, disease-ridden camps by coercion and deceit and subjected to ceaseless anti-Afghan propaganda. Rarely has there been a more captive audience. Playing upon their backwardness and fears, bribing and intimidating them, counterrevolutionary forces had been able to recruit many young tribesmen for their murder gangs. The Democratic Republic of Afghanistan recognizes that the centuries-old traditions make it extremely difficult for the tribesmen to adapt to a settled way of life. To deal with their special problems the government has set up a Tribal Commission. It has offered tribesmen material aid, shelter, food, clothing and medical assistance. The ultimate aim is to provide the tribes with a more settled way of life. Considerable progress has already been made in this direction although much remains to be done.

The history of every people has given birth to forms of association which enable them to solve common problems and meet common dangers. In Afghanistan such a form of association has been the ancient *jirgah* (a council of elders and chiefs of tribes). Drawing upon its own democratic traditions, the government actively involves the *jirgahs* in its efforts to solve the complex problem of the nomadic tribes.

The patient, understanding help of the government as well as the revelation of the true character of the counterrevolution has led large numbers of those deceived to come over to the side of the revolution. This was dramatically brought home

to us at a most unusual press conference in Kabul. On the platform, facing more than 100 journalists of the Afghan and international press, six former leaders of counterrevolutionary bands sat in silence. With the exception of a white-bearded patriarch, they were young men with thick mustaches. Two wore handsome karakul hats (quite common here) which were in sharp contrast to their modest-looking dark baggy pants.

The first to speak was Hairashin, a young man with a long drooping black mustache, from the Herat province. After staring at us intently for a moment or two, Hairashin cried out in the outraged tone of the prophets: "I speak in the name of those forced to flee their homes, to abandon all that is dear to them, their families, their country. I speak in the name of women made widows, children left orphans. I speak for those murdered by the counterrevolutionary bands." His was a cry of pain as well as outrage. Listening to Hairashin's story you understood why. Confused and then alarmed by Amin's atrocities, he was easy prey for the village feudal henchmen who terrorized him, threatened him and his family with death unless he joined their counterrevolutionary band. He was particularly taken in by their lie that the revolution was destroying Islam. In the training camp near Islamabad, Pakistan, one of his instructors was a U.S. officer (there are 300 such U.S. instructors in the "art" of sabotage and murder). In the Intercontinental Hotel where the press conference was held, weapons by "MURDER INCORPORATED U.S.A." were on display.

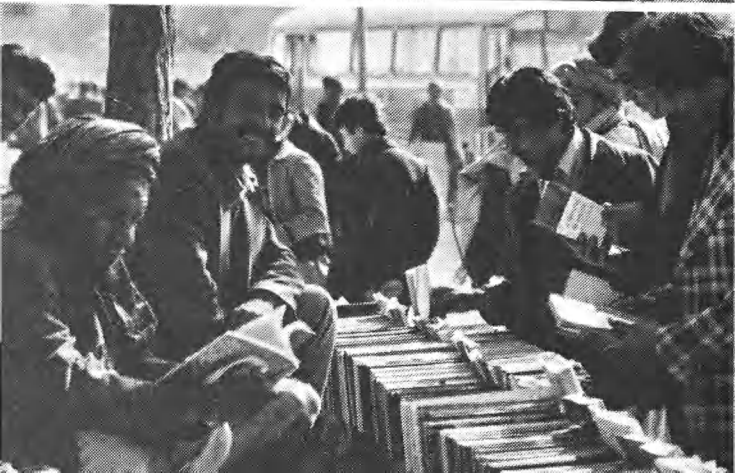
Hairashin was visibly shaken as he recalled how he witnessed the beheading of fifty soldiers of the revolutionary army. Murder followed upon murder. "I will take you to the well in a village where

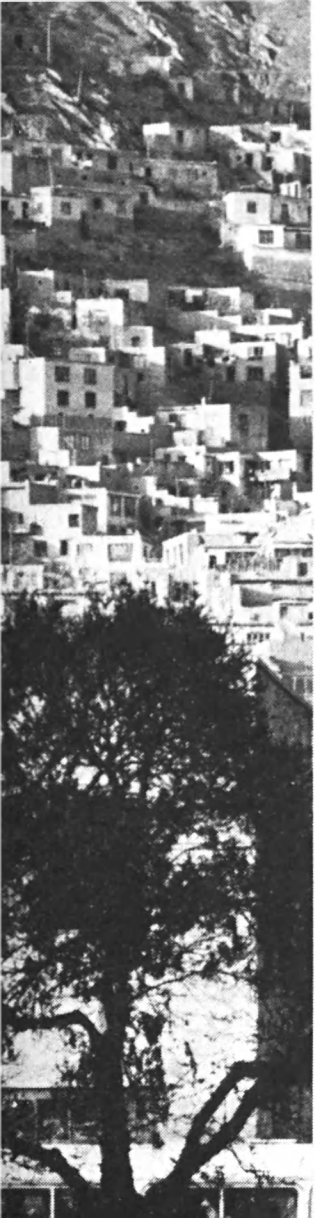
The national flag of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan flying above the head of state's residence in Kabul

Babrak Karmal, General Secretary of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, President of the Revolutionary Council

The parade on April 27, 1983, the anniversary of the April Revolution

The guard of honour at the parade on April 27, 1983





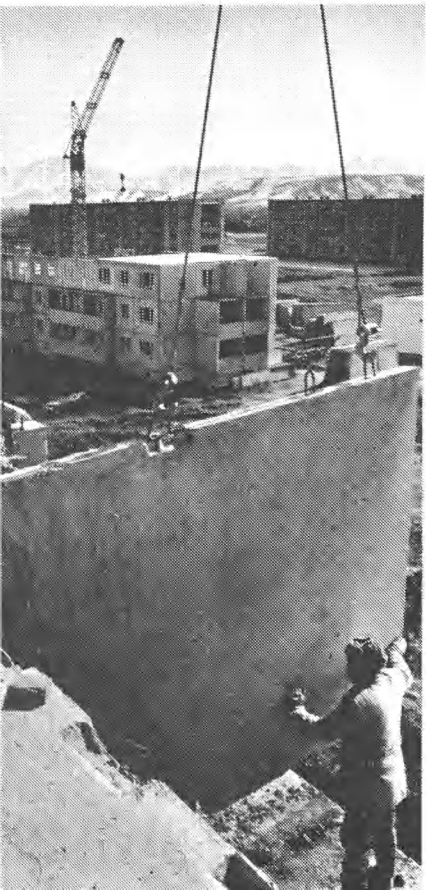
The author Mike Davidow, American writer and journalist

A fruit shop in Kabul

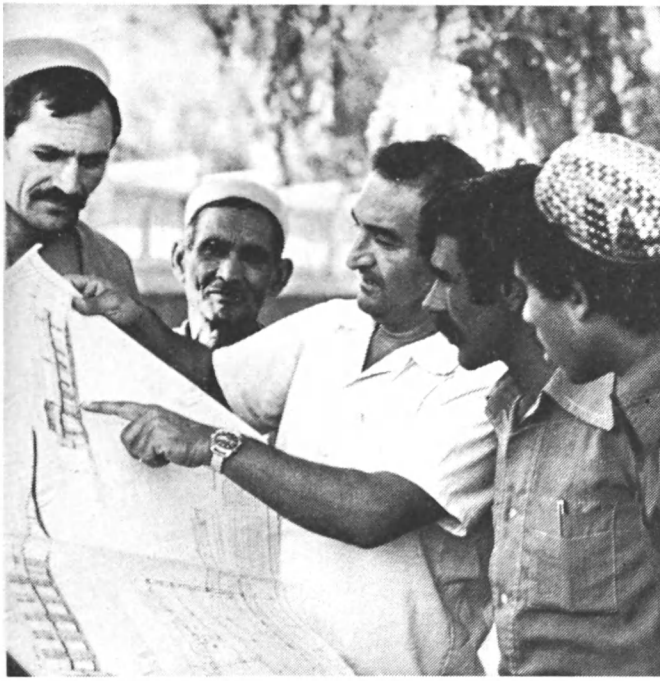
Books being sold on the street

View of old Kabul

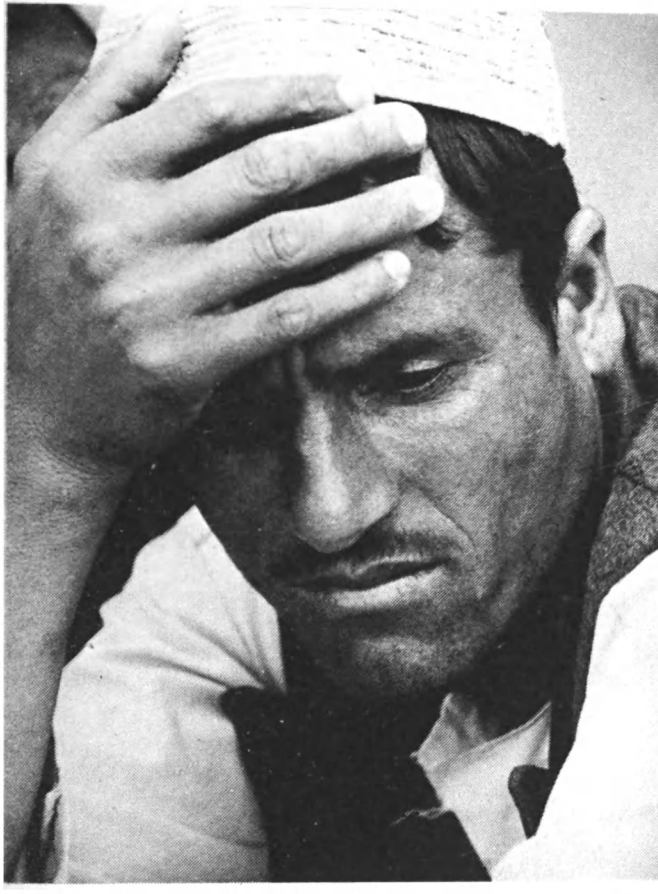
New apartment houses being built in Kabul



A welder who works for a reside construction enterprise



Soviet-Afghan cooperation is developing on an equal basis. Soviet architect Arifdzhan Adizov (centre) showing residents of Jelalabad the plan for a new two-storey department store to be built on the city's central square

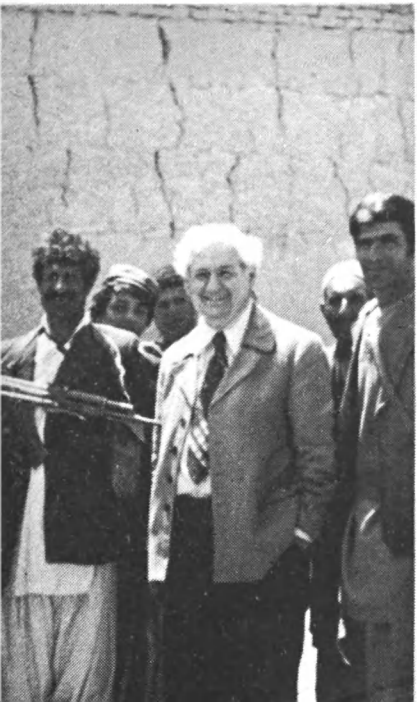


One of the counterrevolutionaries who gave himself up

Afghan soldiers fighting a detachment of counterrevolutionaries

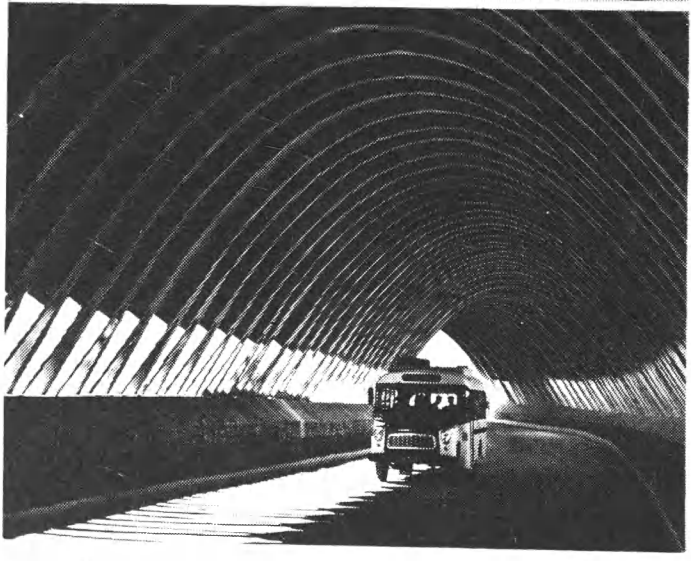
Captured counterrevolutionaries

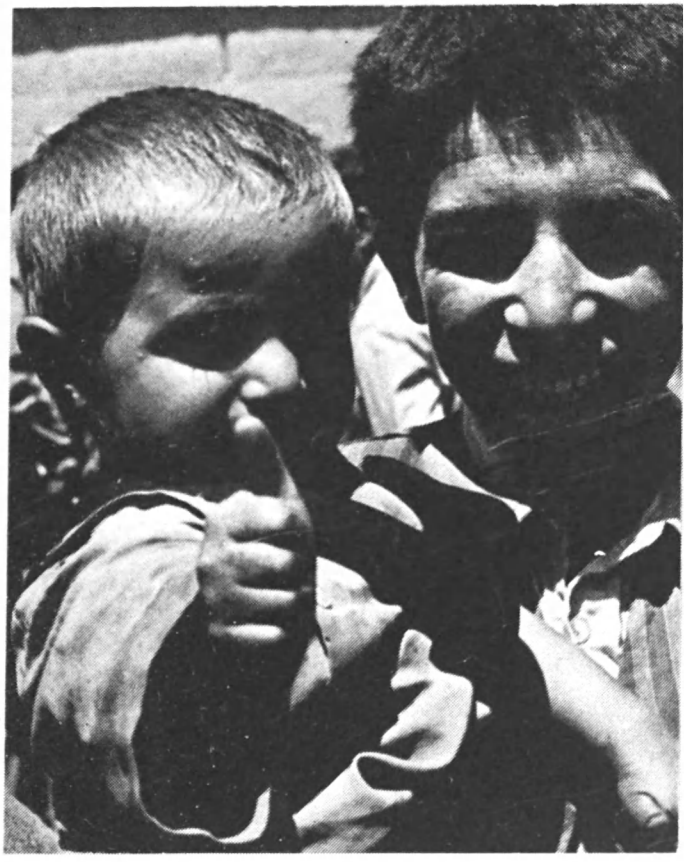
Young Afghans defend the revolution



A peasants' self-defence detachment in the village of Shanee

Defenders of the Afghan revolution on the look-out

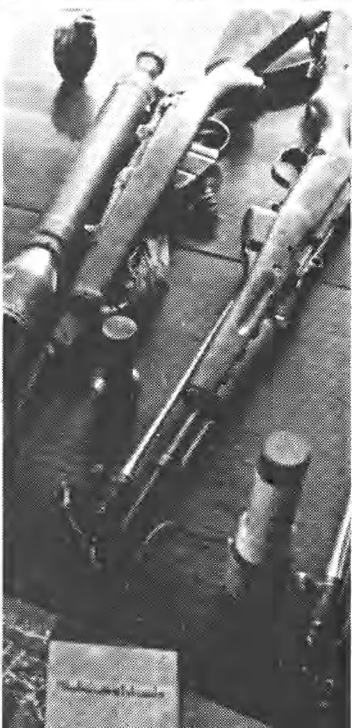




Children are Afghanistan's future

Vasily Ruden, Soviet doctor and captain in the army's medical service examining Afghan children

The highway built in the Hindu Kush with Soviet assistance



Afghan soldiers visiting Soviet soldiers and taking part in a competition to see who can dismantle and reassemble their guns the fastest

Foreign-made mines, secretly placed by counterrevolutionaries on roads, in schools, at markets and in buildings, defused by defenders of the Afghan revolution

Weapons captured from counterrevolutionaries

Soviet soldiers visiting Afghan peasants

The Army and the people are united

the bodies of twenty-two peasants butchered in cold blood were thrown." He looked at us with haunted eyes as he exclaimed: "And all this was done in the name of Islam. May they be cursed to the end of their days."

Abdulah, aged 22, who brought 140 others with him to the side of the government, was asked whether the counterrevolutionary bands were getting stronger or weaker. After Amin's crimes became known, he said, they certainly grew stronger. Now, however, their ranks are steadily being depleted. "What have they to offer the people?" he exclaimed. "Destroyed schools? The bodies of teachers and children? Death and destruction?" Abdulah had drunk deeply from the bitter cup of deception. Counterrevolution has only death to offer.

Many only learn from their own sad experience. This is particularly the case in a land steeped in centuries of feudalism and tribalism. The leaders of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan are well aware of their country's special problems. While they are firm in dealing with counterrevolution, they are patient and understanding with those who, like Abdulah and Hairashin, have learned the hard way how to distinguish between friend and foe. The result is that thousands like them have come over to the side of the revolution. This was demonstrated at an extraordinary meeting in March 1983 of 265 former leaders of armed bands, at the headquarters of the National Fatherland Front. The meeting was ignored or played down by our press. The gathering was addressed by Babrak Karmal, who was loudly cheered when he called upon these former enemies to work with the government and build a prosperous, progressive, democratic Afghanistan. The resolution, which was adopted unanimously, declared: "We are making up for the past

through our action—what we destroyed when we were being deceived we will make good again."

The former leaders of counterrevolutionary bands all pointed an accusing finger at Washington. And for good reason. A steady parade of U.S. government leaders have visited the counterrevolutionary camps in Pakistan and pledged full backing for the murderous attacks upon the people of Afghanistan. This is not only a brazen violation of the principles of the United Nations, and of the norms of international relations. It is OFFICIALLY sanctioned international terrorism.

The decade of dirty war against the heroic people of Vietnam (incidentally also "undeclared") ended in dishonor for the people of the U.S. Who today recalls the names of the U.S. puppets, Thieu and Ky, with anything but contempt? The "undeclared" war against the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan is just as dirty and doomed to defeat. The path of counterrevolution leads to a dead end.

The National Fatherland Front

The national-democratic character of the Afghan Revolution is reflected in the National Fatherland Front formed on June 15, 1981. It is national in that it unites all sections of the population with the exception of the counterrevolutionaries. It is democratic in that it is a grass-roots movement which involves the mass of the people in implementing the goals of the revolution in all spheres of life. Just consider the composition and structure of the Fatherland Front (and compare it with the political setup in the U.S. and the West generally). The founding members of the Front include the following: the People's Democratic Party, trade unions, the Union of Cooperatives, the Democratic Organization of Afghan Youth, the Democratic Organization of Afghan Women, the Union of Journalists, the Union of Writers, the Union of Artists, the Organization of Solidarity and Friendship, the Economic Consultative Council of the Democratic Representatives of Afghanistan, the Council of Scholars and Religious Leaders, and the *Jirgah* (council) of Tribal Representatives. The Front is open to all who want to join and help build prosperous, progressive, democratic Afghanistan.

In his opening address Babrak Karmal, General Secretary of the People's Democratic Party and

President of the Revolutionary Council, pointed ou the specific features of the historical developmer of Afghanistan which made possible the broad cha acter of the Front: "First, the social structure o our society is comparatively little affected by cap talist social relations." This, he noted, opens th door to "patriotic industrialists, merchants, crafts men, tribe elders, ulemas, mullahs, religious leader and all those who wish to take part in building prosperous Afghanistan". Karmal further stated "As regards national capital.... in Afghanistan, i has not reached that level of growth at which mon opoly capital and big compradors and parasiti families could come into being and at which bi national capital could link up with internationa imperialist monopolies in conditions of dominatio by the latter. The national capital of Afghanista mainly comprises small and middle industrialist and merchants who are interested in the progres of the country, in the elimination of backwardnes and the attainment of a reasonable level of econom ic, technical and cultural development." Babra Karmal made it clear that this "does not mean w underestimate the existence and the acuteness o the social contradictions in our society". However he stressed, "the structural characteristics of Af ghan society today permit the uniting, at the stag of national democratic transformations, of all th national patriotic forces".

Another factor promoting such unity is connect ed with the history of Afghanistan's struggle fo independence and against foreign invaders. Despit tribal and national differences, often exploited an incited in the past, particularly by British impe rialism, Afghans overcame these differences when ever their homeland was threatened. It was in th fires of such united patriotic struggles that th

jirgahs were molded. The Fatherland Front draws upon the country's ancient traditions which have stood the test of time. On November 16, 1983 more than 400 former Afghan government and public leaders, including former Members of Parliament, government ministers and members of the officers corps of the old regime, from all parts of the country participated in a two-day *jirgah* (national assembly). They declared their full support for the revolution and denounced U.S. imperialism and the counterrevolution. The Fatherland Front, for similar reasons (though in forms best suited for each country), is today a popular form of national unity among peoples taking the path toward people's democracy and socialism. In February 1970 I visited the then Democratic Republic of Vietnam (today a united Socialist Republic of Vietnam) and became acquainted with the Fatherland Front in that country. In Vietnam, too, the Fatherland Front drew upon the ancient traditions of the united struggle of the Vietnamese for their independence. For many reasons, geographical as well as historical, Vietnam did not go through as intense a period of feudalism as did some other countries. This historical factor played a role in the formation of their Fatherland Front. Then, too, it was developed in the course of long years of bitter struggle for independence against French, Japanese and especially U.S. imperialism.

From what I observed in Afghanistan, there is a similar development taking place. The struggle against the brutal intervention, particularly of U.S. imperialism and the feudal counterrevolution, increasingly assumes a national, popular character. This cannot but be reflected in a similar development of the National Fatherland Front. Moreover, the small businessmen, merchants and traders (who

play quite a substantial role in the commercial li
of Afghanistan) are vitally interested in putting
end once and for all to the U.S. "undeclared wa
and in promoting cultural development. Commer
and trade demand peace and stability. I spoke to
number of businessmen and traders at the exhil
tion of economic achievements in Kabul. Inste
of being hostile to the government, as reported
our press, they fully supported it. Their hostili
was in fact directed against the U.S. which w
fighting an "undeclared war" against their cou
try and the counterrevolutionary murder gan
which were doing everything they could to disru
the economy. These members of "national capita
play a constructive role in the National Fatherla
Front. However, it is the workers and peasants w
constitute the backbone of the Front.

The strength of the Front lies in its popul
mass character. There are now 407 Fatherla
Front councils in villages and towns with a to
membership of more than 600,000. This is no sm
achievement for a country with a population
16 million whose revolution has had to contend w
such an aggressive, powerful state as the U.S. T
feudal counterrevolutionary gangs well understa
the significance of the Fatherland Front with
network of village, kishlak and town councils. Th
well understand the fervent desire for democra
(and its fulfillment) represented by this popu
form of rule. Thus, they have made these counc
the special targets of their murderous attacks. E
the attempts to intimidate the Front have fail
This is reflected in the Front's rapid growth a
intensified activity.

Incidentally, the Voice of America, BBC a
Radio Pakistan (financed by the CIA) have a
singled out the Fatherland Front for attack. Wl

role does the Front play? Here I should note that our media invariably portray our monopoly-dominated government system with its two big business-controlled parties as the "model of democracy". Not only do they praise this "model"; they insist that no other form of government (especially if it reflects people's power, the power of workers and peasants) is "democratic". Here ignorance is combined with arrogance. Thus, the real state of affairs in Afghanistan, its form of government, the extent to which the people participate in it—all this is concealed or distorted.

The National Fatherland Front plays a very substantial and meaningful role in the everyday life of the people. It is the Front which in the villages organizes and supervises the distribution of the land, water and seeds to the peasants. It is the Front which exercises control over prices. It is the Front which directs the campaigns to eliminate illiteracy and supervises education, health care, environmental protection and sports activities. In short, all the basic activities of everyday life of the people are directed through the network of the Front's councils involving 600,000 Afghan citizens. Thus, the National Fatherland Front is a vast training school of people's administration.

The Fatherland Front also plays an important role in involving the people in implementing Afghanistan's foreign policy of nonalignment and in the worldwide struggle to avert the danger of nuclear catastrophe. Afghanistan was one of the founding members of the nonaligned movement and plays a significant role in it today. The Front has organized hundreds of marches, demonstrations and meetings in support of the struggle for independence of the peoples of Lebanon, Palestine, South Africa, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Chile and Grenada.

The Afghan people well understand the bitter consequences of the U.S. Administration's policy of "undeclared wars". In January 1982 the Front led a march of 200,000 before the U.S. Embassy in Kabul in protest against Washington's war against the people of Afghanistan. It was the Front which organized the extremely important meeting of 265 former leaders of counterrevolutionary bands with Babrak Karmal and other officials of the government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The Front has played a key role in explaining the significance of the April Revolution to deceived leaders and members of counterrevolutionary bands. This is in line with one of the chief tasks of the Fatherland Front which is to mobilize the people for the defense of their national democratic revolution. Incidentally, when I visited the spacious headquarters of the Front, I discovered that the building formerly housed the rubber-stamp "parliament" under the feudal regime.

I described the organization and role of the National Fatherland Front because I believe it reveals the popular character of the April 1978 Revolution. The people of the U.S. (and probably of the West as a whole) do not even know of the existence of this truly grass-roots organization which occupies such an important place in Afghan life. I believe if such information were available to them, they would be in a much better position to distinguish fact from fiction concerning the true state of affairs in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

The National Fatherland Front is a vivid example of what the Afghan Revolution is all about. Let the reader in the West and especially in the U.S. pause and consider. Here is an ancient land where the clock of progress had been stopped for centuries. Powerful, privileged feudal forces held the people

in a vise-like grip of poverty, illiteracy and oppression. Trade unions were banned, and public organizations suppressed or kept within prescribed feudal bounds. All power rested in the hands of feudal rulers. The inevitable long-awaited democratic explosion burst the bonds of oppression in April 1978. It ushered in a democratic renaissance. Like all popular revolutions, especially when they have to overcome centuries of oppression and backwardness, the Afghan Revolution suffered its temporary setbacks (for which the criminal Amin regime was responsible). In the years that have since passed mistakes and errors have been overcome, and the democratic character of the revolution has been greatly extended. The National Fatherland Front is one of the most vivid examples of this historic achievement.

The people of the U.S., whose own Revolution more than 200 years ago was an inspiration to peoples of the world, should hail and support the effort of the Afghan people to carry out their own democratic revolution in their OWN WAY.

The Youth—Guardians of the Revolution

A popular revolution is, above all, an awakenin No one has been more awakened in ancient Afgha istan than its youth. It is the young, in and out uniform, you meet on the streets of Kabul and the villages, weapons in hand, who are defendir their revolution.

Grouped around a huge, discarded Soviet plar in the center of what is to become a Youth Villa in Kabul, were several slim but strongly-built your men. "What are you protecting?" I asked them. Tl plane was obviously not in use. "A children's cin ma," a young man told me as he grinned and la down his rifle. I was puzzled. Nothing resemblir a cinema was in sight. "This is the cinema," l explained pointing to the plane. And indeed it wa Inside, it has been skillfully remodelled. Soviet sc diers had worked together with their Afghan bu dies to transform the plane into a spacious, comfc table movie house.

I met young guardians of the Afghan Revoluti particularly around the schools. I watched as th were warmly greeted by boys and girls, scho books in hand or strapped in knapsacks on the backs. There was a comradeship as well as a sen of security in the greeting. The revolution, abo all, means light and Afghanistan hungers for e

lightenment as can only those who have been held down so long by the power of darkness. I believe that if many of our liberal intellectuals who have been taken in by the distortion of this democratic revolution by the U.S. press could meet these youthful guardians of enlightenment, they would feel a sense of shame at their gullibility. The eagerness to serve the people is one of the most touching and heartening sights in this very young revolution in a very old land.

A young revolution, particularly in an ancient country which has been shrouded in darkness for so many centuries, faces extraordinary difficulties. The hardest struggle only begins after the overthrow of the old regime, for it involves the arduous task of not only laying the foundations of the new order but a fierce struggle to overcome the bitter resistance and the tenacious influences of the old one. Moreover, Afghanistan has to contend with a ruthless, powerful ally of the old regime—U.S. imperialism.

The youth I met as my eager, enthusiastic guides and as guardians of the revolution in the street, village, schools and factories, all breathed the invincible spirit immortalized by Nikolai Ostrovsky in his classic *How the Steel Was Tempered.* That spirit was expressed in the words of Pavel Korchagin, the hero of the book, who in reply to those who pitied the hard lot of the makers of the new world replied: "DON'T PITY US, ENVY US". I thought of that ringing declaration when I visited the offices of the Democratic Youth of Afghanistan. It was not your ordinary office where one hears the clicking of typewriters and sees neatly stacked piles of documents. The sound I heard was that of running feet. Young men and women, many bearing arms, others bundles of leaflets and pamphlets,

rushed in, staying only long enough to get materia and instructions. Then, they were on the move. Or the move is what characterizes the 110,000 members of the rapidly growing Democratic Youth of Afghanistan, which was only established in 1975 (it worked underground until the April 1978 Revolution) The representative character of the youth organization (and of the revolution as a whole) is revealed by the active role played in it by the mullahs, religious teachers and leaders.

On the move whither?

The day I visited the youth organization headquarters, two teams, each numbering 20, were off to villages in the provinces to teach and organize peasant youth. Each team was headed by a member of the Central Committee and will work for one and a half months in eight provinces. The teams are not only mobilizers of the youth. They are revolutionary talent scouts on the hunt for long-hidden, long-unrecognized talents. Such talent hunts reveal the genuinely democratic nature of a popular revolution. By the same token they constitute an indictment of the old order which suppressed and denied to the nation the contribution these hitherto illiterate village youth could have made. The teams are warmly welcomed by the peasant youth. However, they are the special target of the counterrevolutionary gangs. Thus, they are protected by the Village Defense Force (as well as prepared to defend themselves).

In the Jangulok plant I came across many young people to whom the inside of a factory was a new world. I observed how conscientiously and understandingly elderly workers took them under their wing. You could see they regarded these willing but raw youth as the apple of their eye. The movement of youth shock brigades now embraces

42,000 workers, a considerable number when one considers the modest size of the Afghan working class as a whole.

In its early days the Democratic Youth of Afghanistan was largely composed of student youth. The mass of peasant and worker youth were illiterate. Today 43 per cent of the new members are young workers and peasants. One of the most difficult problems faced by the Democratic Youth of Afghanistan and the Afghan Revolution in general is reflected in the composition of the organization in respect to sex. Only 12 per cent are women. Yet, 12 per cent, we were told by the then First Secretary, Burhan Ghasi, marked a decided advance. Only a year ago it was five per cent. In another chapter I will discuss the particular situation in respect to the position of women in today's Afghanistan.

The Democratic Youth of Afghanistan, of course, plays a particularly significant role in the armed forces. They are in the thick of the struggle to defend the national democratic revolution. The guardians of the revolution are also teachers of the revolution. Many of the instructors in towns and villages are university students. But a large number of the teachers were themselves illiterate before the April Revolution. Members of the Democratic Youth of Afghanistan are from 15 to 25 years of age. There are two million in that age bracket in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is a deeply religious Muslim country and both the government and the youth organization respect the religious beliefs of young people. Contrary to what is reported in our press, the mosques are full. The scene I witnessed upon leaving the great hall in Kabul where Babrak Karmal had delivered a major address on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the April Revolution dramati-

cally illustrates the broad support among Muslim enjoyed by the government. Carpets were carefull spread out along the street outside the meeting hal Muslims, young and old, lifted their heads and turn ed their eyes towards Mecca, in prayer.

The feudal counterrevolutionary gangs are pa ticularly active among the most backward youtl especially among the nomadic tribes and in tl villages. They exploit their ignorance and illiterac play upon their prejudices and fears (especially i respect to the role of women in democratic Afgha istan). I heard from the lips of young men wl were formerly members of such gangs, how the were deceived as well as coerced. Thus, the work the Democratic Youth of Afghanistan is particular important and difficult among the village and n madic youth. The brave young men and women wl are the bearers of enlightenment in the provinc are hunted by counterrevolutionary assassinatic squads similar to the "death squads" in El Salv dor. However, unlike El Salvador, the armed force the militia and the youth and people of the villag are fully capable of coping with the bands of k lers. Of course, there are martyred young men a women. For our big business press (which gle fully reports and exaggerates the casualties), th is the big and almost the only news it publish about the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

Leaders of the youth organization made no effo to conceal the difficult problems that need to l solved in work among village and nomadic yout But they breathe a spirit of optimism. It is an o timism that looks reality in the eye and takes in account the particular path the popular revoluti in Afghanistan must traverse. It is an optimis based on the accomplishments achieved in the fa of internal and external enemies. It is an optimis

that is nourished by the firm, fraternal ties existing between the Democratic Youth of Afghanistan and progressive and democratic youth organizations throughout the world. I visited the impressive photo exhibition on the history of more than six decades of struggle and achievements of Soviet youth (the exhibition is also touring Afghanistan's provinces), held at the newly-built beautiful Soviet House of Culture and Science in Kabul. Groups of Afghan youth stopped to study the photos—pages in the annals of the making of a new, more humane world. Now it was their turn. And from what I observed, the Afghan youth will yet write their own glorious pages in the history of ancient Afghanistan.

The Revolution and Women

On April 27, 1983, on Akbar Khan Avenue (n
ed after an Afghan hero in the struggle against I
ish imperialism) I saw the light of the Revolu
in the faces of Afghan women, some of them w
ing the *chodaree*. More than 400,000 people f
Kabul and nearby villages had poured into
square in one unending stream in a joyful cele
tion of the April Revolution.

Women, many with their children by their
or in their arms, made up half of the marchers
parade, the *chodaree* was far less in view.
women I had seen in the colorful bazaars in K
and in the Shanee village, the girls I had me
Sarcoona secondary school—all were now transf
ed. It was a bright, sunny day but quite ano
glow illuminated their bronzed faces. Only t
emerging from a long, terrible darkness can rac
such light. The emergence into bright sunlight
centuries of darkness is a sight to behold. All
written on the faces of these women. There w
touching sadness as well as joy in the eyes of
old women. Sadness because the new world en
ing had come so late in their lives. Joy bec
they had lived to see it. The old still hovers
Afghanistan and clings with a particular tena

grip to the women. The *chodaree* is only a symbol of that grip. No section of the population had feudalism shackled more harshly than women. They were excluded from much of the life of the country: political, social and economic. The doors of learning were closed to all but a few. Feudal ties largely limited their sphere of activity to the home. To undo the effects of centuries of such oppression and heal the psychological scars is one of the most difficult tasks this young revolution confronts. The complexity of this age-old problem was understood and acknowledged by all to whom I spoke in Afghanistan.

On Akbar Khan Avenue that delightful summer day I got a glimpse of what the future will bring. Women from factories, dressed in their work clothes marched by proudly carrying their tools. They were followed by women in white, doctors and nurses, women in uniform—soldiers of the Revolution, and teachers escorting their schoolchildren. Two women stood guard over a huge float depicting the globe menaced by a U.S. missile hovering over it. But the missile was broken in two. A white dove of peace was borne high by a woman in a cinnamon-colored *chodaree*. Another woman, her face too concealed, pushed her way through the crowd with her baby in her arms toward the reviewing stand to get a closer look at the leaders of the government and particularly Anahita Ratebzad, a member of the Political Bureau of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan and President of the Women's Democratic Organization. Anahita Ratebzad, a woman of strikingly handsome appearance and dynamic personality, is playing an extremely important role in the democratic transformation of the country.

I thought to myself: here in ancient Afghanistan is women's liberation in action, and yet unfortunate-

ly all too many of those active in our own women liberation movement have fallen victim the lies and slanders of our big business pres about the true state of affairs in the Democratic Re public of Afghanistan.

The April Revolution not only has opened th doors of learning to women. It has opened th doors of industry and slowly but steadily more an more women are beginning to enter it. This in itse is quite a revolution when one considers that fo centuries a woman's place was in the home. Wome are beginning to play an important role in the trad unions.

The Secretary of the Central Council of Afgha istan Trade Unions is a young woman, 31-year-o Nafisa Paikargar, an economist by training. Th Women's Democratic Organization of Afghanista (WDOA) which occupies a significant position the National Fatherland Front, is itself perhaps th best indication of the changes taking place in A ghanistan and even more of the struggle to achie full equality of the sexes. In her speech on March on the eve of the International Women's Day, An hita Ratebzad pointed to some of the achievement the number of women employed in industries an service sphere—of working women in general has doubled in the past five years, and the mem bership of the Women's Democratic Organizatio of Afghanistan has increased about five times. Th WDOA, a member of the Women's Internation Democratic Federation, maintains contact with international organizations. The difficult problem were frankly admitted by Ratebzad in her speec "The humane call of the Revolution has not y reached the ears of the majority of the worki women." Educational work must be intensifi "among the millions of women who are far fro

us", namely, "girls in rural areas, women of various tribes and nomadic women". And Ratebzad pointed out that the task could not be left to the women alone. The fury of the counterrevolutionary gangs is particularly directed against fighters for women's liberation. A very high proportion of the victims of the murder bands were women who led the struggle for equality. The counterrevolution plays on centuries-old prejudices, especially among the nomadic tribes and in the villages, in an attempt to turn them against the government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The goal of the counterrevolution is the restoration and maintenance of feudal relations. And feudal relations mean first of all the enslavement of women. It is here that feudal relations are the most tenacious and most difficult to uproot.

My discussions with leaders of the WDOA showed that they not only had a clear understanding of the problems but also took a realistic approach to solving them. The Women's Democratic Organization has a special department which conducts educational work among women. The approach varies in respect to students, women in the home, working women and especially peasant and nomadic women. Special attention is given to work among women at home and in the villages. Because of long-standing traditions and feudal influences, the Women's Democratic Organization in the provinces maintains separate organizations for young women. Women are not immediately invited to join the WDOA. Here a carefully worked-out step-by-step approach is used. The first step is to teach young women to read and write in the widespread literacy classes. This is not as simple as it seems because it requires a struggle against deeply imbedded concepts which excluded women from education and social contact.

Literacy classes are followed by classes in hygien and medical care.

The very struggle to defend the gains of the Apr Revolution tends to accelerate the process to a cer tain extent. Thus, Nafisa Paikargar told me, fo example, women in many villages, especially th young, have joined the Village Defense Force. Som are in the armed forces. Still more have entere factories to replace the men who are in the arme forces.

Perhaps the significance of what is taking place i the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan today wa best expressed to me in the simple but heartfe words of Bareganek Khaim, aged 30 and a mothe of four. I met her at her milling machine at th Jangalak plant in Kabul. "We are working fo ourselves at last. So, EVERYONE has to wor well," she said. EVERYONE is the key word her In feudal Afghanistan everyone excluded half tl population. Now everyone means EVERYONE.

More Than Six Decades of Soviet Aid

If Americans know little about the history of Soviet-Afghan relations in general, they know even less about the more than six decades of Soviet aid to Afghanistan. The aid was consistent regardless of the particular political and social system existing at the time in Afghanistan. The peaceful, mutually beneficial relations between the socialist Soviet Union and the kingdom of feudal Afghanistan was perhaps the first example of the fruits of peaceful coexistence. At no time was the economic aid given to Afghanistan with political or military strings attached. Nor did it ever result in financial enslavement.

By comparison, the U.S.A.'s southern neighbor, Mexico, was not only deprived of vast areas of its richest territory in the rapacious war waged against it in 1848 (denounced by Abraham Lincoln); it was repeatedly invaded by the U.S., its popular hero, Pancho Villa, being attacked in the U.S. press as a "bandit". All this was aimed at imposing upon Mexico a regime to the liking of U.S. imperialism. Today, though an independent, sovereign state, Mexico is in debt to U.S. bankers to the tune of 85 billion dollars and its economy is being drained by staggering interest rates.

Economic and trade relations between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan have always been of a

different character since the USSR has no EXXONs ITTs, IBMs, Chase Manhattan Banks and othe multinational corporations engaged in an unceasin hunt to drain a country of its wealth, resources an labor. On February 28, 1921, at a time, when th young Soviet Republic, after the frightful losses i had suffered in World War I, was still exhausted b the Civil War initiated by the czarist-capitalist cou terrevolution aided by the military interventio of fourteen major capitalist powers (including th U.S.), it signed the first agreement providing ec nomic aid to Afghanistan. Thus began more tha 60 years of steadily increasing Soviet aid to Afgha istan and of growing economic relations betwe the two countries. In 1932, when Afghanistan wa hard hit by the Great Depression which struck th capitalist world, the Soviet Union was first amon the importers of Afghanistan's products and th second greatest exporter to it. Afghanistan's ma export products—wool, cotton, karakul, dried frui —were deeply affected. The Soviet Union, engag in its first five-year plan and in the throes dynamic growth, helped to ease Afghanistan's su fering. It exchanged finished products and oth consumer goods for Afghanistan's exports. Ev during the difficult years of the Great Patriotic W against fascism (World War II), itself on very tig rations, the USSR supplied Afghanistan with co modity goods including oil products, sugar, so and matches.

The USSR had hardly finished repairing the ra ages of the Great Patriotic War when it signed comprehensive economic agreement with Afgha stan in 1954. It built for that country grain ele tors, storage bins, oil storage tanks and asph plants. In 1956 it granted 100 million dollars credit to help finance Afghanistan's second five-y

plan. This enabled Afghanistan to embark on a large-scale geological survey of its rich mineral resources. Over a period of more than 25 years hundreds of Soviet geologists working together with their Afghan colleagues opened up a treasure-house of the country's vast resources: natural gas, oil, iron ore, copper, coal. Previously Italian and Canadian geologists had explored the land without success.

The number of construction projects which the Soviet Union helped build in Afghanistan is indeed impressive. They included the big hydropower station in Nagloo, the Jalalabad irrigation system, a fertilizer plant in Mazare-Sharif and the Jangalak auto plant in Kabul (in 1961). An interest-free loan of 100 million dollars to be repaid over a period of 50 years was provided to Afghanistan. All this aid was given when Afghanistan was still a feudal monarchy. All told, from 1954 to the present time about 250 agreements between the two countries have been signed. They have provided, among other things, for the construction with Soviet aid of 170 large projects which in addition to industrial enterprises include educational and research institutions and the development of modern technology. Since 1945, 80 large industrial projects have been constructed with Soviet assistance at which more than 50,000 Afghans acquired modern skills. Among the projects built and in operation are: the Jalalabad irrigation system near the border with Pakistan, four large state farms, four hydropower stations, and housing complexes. In addition, vast deposits of natural gas, oil, copper and coal are being tapped.

One of Afghanistan's most serious problems is the lack of a modern infrastructure. Transportation poses a particularly difficult problem, for 95 per cent of the country's territory is mountainous. To this

day the country is still without a single railroad. T build transport links through the mountains re quires tremendous investments. Moreover, befor such an undertaking can get under way, condition throughout the country would have to be normalized One of the Soviet Union's most important forms o assistance has been the building of Afghanistan' system of roads and highways. The USSR has con structed 1,600 kilometers of highways out of a tota of 2,500 kilometers planned. Previously it was im possible to travel from Kabul to the north durin winter. Now the roads are used all year round.

Soviet aid to Afghan agriculture has been of spe cial significance and is perhaps most in evidence several tractor stations and seven veterinary labora tories have been built with Soviet assistance, an hundreds of Soviet specialists are working on A ghan farms. The USSR has been and is no more than ever a training center for Afghan spe cialists in all spheres of the economy, science an culture. Since 1954, 7,000 Afghan specialists hav been trained free of charge. The Soviet Union ha built free of charge the Kabul Polytechnical Inst tute (1969), the Mining Institute in Mazare-Shar (1971), and the Kabul Auto Mechanics Technic School. A total of 2,000 students study in these in stitutions annually. The Soviet Union has also bui eight vocational schools in Afghanistan for trainin skilled workers in agriculture, the power industr mechanics and irrigation. Since 1959 the USSR ha also trained 250 instructors in the fields of constru tion, geology, the gas and oil industry and archite ture. This is in addition to the on-the-job trainin of large numbers of skilled workers. About 1,5(Afghan students are studying in Moscow, Kiev a Tashkent at institutes of medicine, transportatio agronomy and aeronautics. More than 350 Afgh

workers annually get free job training at Soviet plants.

After the April 1978 national democratic revolution, Soviet aid to Afghanistan and trade between the two countries have increased considerably. There are two main reasons for this development. First, the USSR takes its responsibilities in the field of international solidarity seriously. The new Afghanistan is urgently in need of such help and the Soviet Union has fully responded. Secondly, it is necessary to make up for the politically-motivated economic boycott and blockade imposed by the U.S. and the world financial organizations it controls. Economic blockade is the weapon employed by world imperialism, especially U.S. imperialism, to stifle any genuine popular revolution. Thus, economic aid from socialist countries is one of the most effective expressions of support to the world-wide national liberation movement. Incidentally, one of the main reasons behind the Reagan Administration's rabid anti-Soviet campaign reflected in its "crusade against communism" is precisely that it regards Soviet aid as "interfering" with its aim of subjugating developing and newly-liberated countries to U.S. imperialist interests.

The consistent help given to the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan by the socialist countries and particularly the USSR is in stark contrast to the vengeful efforts of the U.S. to "punish" Afghanistan for its national democratic revolution. The U.S.-dominated International Monetary Fund has cut off all financial aid to the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, which is still a member. The Gelman irrigation system, a U.S. project in which the Afghan government had invested heavily, has been frozen in a state of unfinished construction. Not only has the Afghan government lost its investment; it still

has to pay high interest to the banks for the mone it borrowed. The U.S. also put a stop to the buildin of a fertilizer plant and a hospital in Kabul. Th Soviet Union, on the other hand, is expanding it medical assistance to the country. It has built 500-bed hospital in Kabul as well as a blood ban and is putting the finishing touches to a polyclini which will care for 60 outpatients daily.

To sum up, Soviet-built projects account for 7 per cent of the industrial production of the stat sector (the largest in Afghanistan) and 40 to 4 per cent of the country's national income. The So viet Union provides Afghanistan with credit, re payable over a period of 50, 30 or 15 years eithe free or at two per cent interest. Mohamad Kha Jalalar, the very knowledgeable and energetic Mi ister of Trade of the Democratic Republic of A ghanistan (who, incidentally, served in the previou regime), told me that as far as his country wa concerned, it was ready to expand trade with a Western countries including the U.S. He pointe out that at present trade with the U.S. was a triflin 10-15 million dollars annually. This, he noted, wa entirely the fault of the U.S. Government which ha placed severe restrictions on normal commerce b tween Afghanistan and the U.S.

An objective review of the 60-year history c Soviet-Afghan economic relations (which our bi business press avoids like the plague) sheds muc needed light on present relations between the tw countries. Essentially, it reveals the development friendly relations based upon mutual benefit. Th such friendly relations now include military assis ance is entirely of the making of aggressive U. imperialism which today is acting like an interna tional outlaw recognizing no national borders or n tional sovereignty, and is aiding the forces of rea

tion everywhere from Grenada, Lebanon, El Salvador, Nicaragua to Afghanistan.

One has to be wilfully blind not to see the affection and respect people in the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan have for the Soviet Union. This good will is based upon the solid rock of reality—more than sixty years of unremitting aid given especially when it was most needed.

The Significance of the Afghan Revolution

In Afghanistan it is the historical process o progress and liberation which has led to the co lapse of the colonial world that U.S. imperialism seeking to halt. "Undeclared wars", Rapid Deplo ment Force, threats of "limited" and "prolonge nuclear wars—all are directed at turning back th clock of history. The "Soviet threat" is the smok screen for aggression in what U.S. imperialism d clares to be its zone of "vital interests". And tha it is clear by now, includes a very large part of th globe.

How does the Afghan Revolution fit into th picture? What is its special significance? The A ghan Revolution is breaking new ground. It h dealt a severe blow to that anachronism of histor feudalism, which still maintains a tenacious grip o what is called the Muslim world. It is in a way i the vanguard of the anti-imperialist, anti-feudal u surge in that part of the globe. It is in the for front of the battle to uproot and eliminate the enti system of feudalism.

I have tried to present, often in vignette for the many faces and the very spirit of an awake ing ancient country in the process of making up f lost time. It is a spirit of discovering and learni

(always something new) as it advances often painfully, but with determination. The leaders and those active in transforming their country into a modern, democratic state show a readiness to learn, a frank and sober realization of the complexities they face coupled with great confidence in the future.

Confidence in the future—this I met everywhere notwithstanding the cruel effects of the "undeclared war" being waged against Afghanistan. I saw it at the crowded colorful bazaars of Kabul, in its teeming streets, in the factories where a working class is emerging, in the children of the Shanee village who eagerly participated in a spontaneous English lesson. I witnessed it in the huge parade in Kabul on April 27 (the 5th anniversary of the April Revolution).

Great Beginnings are not easy to achieve. Difficulties always come with Great Beginnings. There are dangerous pitfalls, costly detours that must be avoided. This is well understood by the enemies of Great Beginnings inside and outside the country, who seize upon any misstep to drown the popular revolution in blood. Grenada provides a tragic example of this. The Afghan Revolution, too, had to contend with its dangerous pitfalls. Hafizullah Amin, who seized power after assassinating the then head of the government, Noor Mohammad Taraki, and killing and imprisoning thousands of the best sons and daughters of the Afghan Revolution, was the would-be Pol Pot of Afghanistan. His brutal excesses against mullahs, peasants, workers, small businessmen and traders distorted the real face of the April Revolution and opened the door to counterrevolution. But the Afghan Revolution found the strength within itself quickly to avert this threat to the gains of the revolution and prevent the bloodbath that would have inevitably accompanied it.

Anyone with any objectivity visiting Afghanista today can grasp the truth of Babrak Karmal's sob estimate of the present situation in Afghanista "We have now reached the phase of complete smashing the counterrevolution. We are fully c pable of defending the revolution. This is not me wishful thinking. Life itself and, above all, th spirit of the people reflect this all-important deve opment. You see it in the calm, confident wa people go about the business of everyday life. The is understandable vigilance, but no fear. The cou terrevolutionary gangs can still carry out terro ist activity, cowardly assassinations and murder acts of sabotage and blind, desperate rage. The however, cannot threaten the revolution itself. Th time has now gone forever.

Of course, the very need to devote so much tim and effort to the defense of the revolution mak progress in implementing the tasks of the revol tion more difficult and costly. One of the chief aim of U.S. imperialism is to exact that price and muc more if possible from any people anywhere in th world, whether it is Grenada, Nicaragua, Angol or Afghanistan, who are embarking on a way of li not to the liking of Washington. However, progre has been and is being made. Babrak Karmal h called for increasing the pace of the advance on th economic and social fronts. He said in his speech c the occasion of the revolution's 5th anniversar "The economic development of the country is vital importance. The solution of this problem has very important bearing on the strengthening of th social pillars of the revolutionary regime and on th further social and political isolation of the counte revolutionary forces... THEREFORE THE DEVE OPMENT OF THE COUNTRY AND THE R HABILITATION OF THE ECONOMIC INSTITU

TIONS DAMAGED BY THE BANDITS ARE AS URGENT AS THE STRUGGLE AGAINST THE COUNTERREVOLUTION."

This is the main line of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan today. THERE WILL BE NO POSTPONEMENT in fully implementing the land reform program, the modernization of agriculture, taking the first steps toward developing a modern industry, intensifying the cultural revolution, beginning the awesome task of replacing feudal hovels with modern housing, and in establishing an adequate system of medical service. The armed struggle against the counterrevolution and intervention will go on but NOT at the expense of progress. This, in itself, is best proof of the defeat of the forces of counterrevolution and intervention. Meanwhile, the efforts to arrive at a political settlement will continue with the aid of the U.N. Secretary-General.

International solidarity with the Afghan national democratic revolution means, above all, putting a stop to outside interference in the affairs of the Afghan people. Those in the U.S. and in the West generally who continue to swallow the myth of Soviet invasion, whether they are aware of it or not, are playing into the hands of counterrevolution and imperialism. In effect, they are saying to the Afghan people: "GIVE UP YOUR DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION AND RETURN TO YOUR FEUDAL PAST. GIVE UP YOUR HOPE TO LIVE IN THE 20th AND THE FORTHCOMING 21st CENTURY AND RETURN TO THE MIDDLE AGES."

At the conclusion of my visit, Kobl, a bright, young Afghan journalist who acted as one of my guides, asked for my impressions. He listened intently to what I had to say and then in a soft but eager voice responded: "Now tell me something

about our revolution that is sad." For a mome
I was at a loss to know what he meant. The wo
"sad" seemed out of place. Then I understood. T
word "sad" here points to weaknesses and problem
The eagerness to learn is one of the most touchin
and heartening aspects of this young revolution
a very ancient land. I found a similar desire
learn from mistakes when in February 1970 I visi
ed the Quang Binh province bordering the 17
parallel which at that time divided North and Sou
Vietnam. The young man who had worked himse
to the bone organizing an excellent, intense tou
pleaded with me to tell him what he did "wrong

I told Kobl: "It's 'sad' to see the poverty a
backwardness—that is the legacy of centuries
feudalism. But what makes me even 'sadder' is t
knowledge that my country is doing its utmost
punish the Afghan people for daring to do aw
with that misery." Kobl was, of course, right. The
is much in Afghanistan to be "sad" about. B
there is so much more at which the Afghan peop
can rejoice. Their wonderful youth, for examp
are not only in the forefront of the defense of th
democratic revolution, like Kobl, they are eager
learn. The national democratic revolution of Afgh
istan has gone through very difficult times a
faces great problems. Centuries of feudal, tri
and clan existence will take time and skill to ov
come. However, it is not the presence of proble
but the firm determination and the progress bei
made to resolve them that distinguishes a popu
revolution. That is why there is far more cause
REJOICING than for feeling "sad" about the De
ocratic Republic of Afghanistan today.

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